



## Nora C. Liell

July 6, 2025

Nora Liell — aka Nowa, the Kitchen Witch, the Wicked Witch of the North Road, Sissy Maudwin, Arafel Palantir Tintalle Elva, and, of course, Mom — passed away from ovarian cancer on Sunday, July 6th. She was held in light and hand by her daughters and sisters, attended to and visited by countless friends and family, and went gently into the West. She will be more than missed through the end of our days.

Nora wore many hats, dressed impeccably to match, but her favorite was undeniably the pointy kind. She grew up the Power Girl of the Indiana backwoods, a rowdy, rough-and-tumble master of the long loogie and the hard noogie. Her early life was rarely easy, but it made for some fantastic fables. Nora was a veteran of both Woodstock and the Vietnam War protests, an early adopter of the skateboard, a black belt in Taekwondo, and a resident of the Rudrananda Ashram. Nora hitchhiked the vast majority of the continental US (and, very briefly until forcibly ejected, Mexico), accompanied by Phyllis, her best friend, and Clyde, the ugliest dog in the world. During this time she found her spiritual homes in the mountains of Colorado and the swamps of New Orleans, managed to escape the clutches of a serial killer, rode the bus with Ken Kesey, and dodged cartels on the southwestern border.

When she returned to Bloomington, it was for good. She was a known and dangerous quantity at Bullwinkles, The Bluebird, Dunn Meadow, and many

other old town institutions. A spitfire server at the Tao restaurant, Nora dreamt up the recipe for their famous tao dressing. She worked as a buyer for the White Rabbit, a turning point in her life. The community was well familiar with her escapades, like the time Grace Slick pulled her on stage with B.B. King, or when she showered the dining public at Pancho's Villa with dollar bills. Rest in peace to both the bar windows and the hearts she broke in turn.

Nora was a founder and partner in many ventures: T.W.A.T.: Trained Women Against Thugs, an informal feminist vigilante group; the Eye of Osiris, a retail hub for the alternative; and Lothlorien, a nature sanctuary, education center and festival ground based in Lawrence County. The vigilantes disbanded and the Eye closed, but Lothlorien continues, a legacy of conservation and community to this day. Somewhere between her many lives, Nora managed to squeeze in time to manage the F.C. Chapulín soccer team. She demonstrated her dominance by leg wrestling the Brazilian players, retiring with an impressive record of wins.

She was an artist. Nora was a fearless negotiator of all mediums: an accomplished painter, she also sculpted in clay and limestone, and was on the Board of Directors for the Limestone Symposium for many years. Her paper owl sculpture was chosen to represent the Taskboard brand on their website. Anyone who has visited her home has experienced her artistry as it was purely manifest. A master of 'scapes of all kinds, Nora curated tables, shelves, and elaborate holiday displays that would rival any New York department store window. Her beloved house is a botanical garden on the outside and a museum on the inside, full of books, art, treasures, and miscellaneous strangery befitting her witchy reputation. She had a particular love of dead things, and her vast collection of mummified animals and recovered bones will be passed on and/or buried with respect. But out of all her artistic endeavors, dance was her great passion. Her skill with the veil and sword was, without hyperbole, world-renowned. She shared her experience through classes

informally known as Nora's House of Pain, where she trained some of the Bloomington bellydance luminaries. You may have seen her dancing with the Daughters of Gaia, a troupe of bellydancers who performed regularly at events like the 4th Street Art Fair.

Nora's middle years were spent as a court reporter and investigator, helping pursue and collate evidence to ensure that the right people were served the right justice. Her righteous fury at world politics and the abuses of the powerful drove her relentlessly to fight the good fight against the corrupt, dishonest, and petty alike. She did not truck with liars, but she treated even the cruelest subjects with the deepest compassion. Nora knew evil intimately, yet she believed anyone could be better than they were. She didn't believe in universal justice, but she made sure she did her part to create a just world.

At any given time, Nora was in the middle of several different books, fiction and non-fiction alike. She loved going to the movies, especially for stupid action films, and kept up with music new and old. She was the social locus of her neighborhood, regularly mowing the lawns of neighbors and hosting community cookouts. Everyone adored their friendly local witch/ crazy cat lady/ resident grandmother. She enjoyed being fun and couldn't help but be funny. Her pranks may have occasionally bordered on psychological torture... but at least she always found them hilarious. Deeply proud of her ancestral roots in Ireland, Nora claimed and received her Irish citizenship. The green hills will sing of her passing.

And finally, there was the role of which she was most proud, of her creations most beloved: Mother to her two daughters, who will never forget the powerhouse that was their mother, and who love her, love her, love her.

We are not alone in this. Nora is folklore. Nora is legend. The ripples of her life

have shaped so many. She leaves behind her two daughters, Avery and Katie; her dear sisters Kitty, Maggy, Becky, Karen, and their families; her cats Louis and Stella; and a whole cauldron of unofficial children, grandchildren, and heart-siblings. Her friends could fill a zip code, her acquaintances a county. She is preceded in death by her parents Pat and John, her brother Jonny, her niece Erika, even more friends, and many loved pets. Stanley and Rita, her familiars, went scouting the road before her. No doubt they led her on into the infinity she visited in fondly-recalled dreams: dreams of flying, free, under an eternal moon.

Hail the Traveler.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to the Limestone Symposium, in support of the future Nora C. Liell Youth Scholarship Fund. <https://limestonesymposium.org/donate/>

# Tribute Wall

JS

“ Back in the day, I knew Nora from her sister Kitty being in love with my best friend Michael. Convolutd but yes, once in a while Nora would show up & lay down law. I was periphery on all that nonsense but a Nora appearance was special. Nora had a thing that .01% of people you'll ever meet possess. And it's indefinable & SO precious. Thank you, Nora 🕊️🙏

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**Judie K Stein** - March 26 at 05:23 PM

JA

“ I miss you and love you everyday. Wish we could chat about my lawn-- I know you'd have the best advice. Fly high and hail the traveler

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**Jack** - October 29, 2025 at 02:18 PM

MG

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Michael T. Grubb** - August 27, 2025 at 03:23 PM

MG

“ *Nora is the one friend I have known all my life. I have known her since first grade at Sanders Elementary through graduating Bloomington High School in 1970. Nora was very competitive. In fifth grade, Nora and I tied for first place of our group of the 40 yard dash. Not fast, but we had so much fun! In 8th grade science class, we were the last two remaining in the electrical conductivity test, but she outlasted me and won. Again, we had lots of fun and laughed a lot together. We went separate ways in life, but always felt comfortable around each other and discussed that each time we were together. Nora was at the last group meeting of friends held at my house in October of 2023. I will miss you Nora, as the world is less without you.*

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**Michael T. Grubb** - August 27, 2025 at 03:17 PM