



Iola Lucille Merritt

June 17, 1931 - January 18, 2020

Lucille Craig Merritt

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It is with great sadness that the family of Lucille Craig Merritt ("Luci" to her friends and the arts community) announces her passing in Visalia, CA on January 18, 2020, at the age of 88.

On June 17, 1931, Luci was born Iola Lucille Craig in the town of Sheffield TX to parents Jones and Iola "Bunny" Craig.

In 1941 Jones and Bunny moved their family from Texas to California, to live near their extended family. In 1942 the Craigs settled in Lancaster CA, which became their home.

In 1944 Luci graduated Lancaster Elementary School and enrolled in Antelope Valley High School college prep. In 1945 Luci met upper classmate Bill Brewer and soon the two fell in love. Bill and Luci graduated high school and married in May 1947.

In 1949 the couple gave birth to a baby girl, Paula Gayle Brewer, and in 1951 they gave birth to a second baby girl, Donna Leigh Brewer. Luci was a devoted homemaker.

Luci loved to read everything and more! She became a master cook, passionate about recipes and the science of cooking. Luci also enjoyed fashion and interior design and she was a beautiful seamstress. Among many of her talents, Luci was a terrific dancer, ballroom and jitterbug. Luci taught Bill to dance. Often Bill and Luci and the children would "dance the night away" in their living room.

Bill worked in his father's radiator repair shop where he learned everything about mechanics and flying small engine airplanes. Luci and Bill and "the girls" spent their summer vacations on the water, whether Lake Mead, Catalina Island or Lake Shasta. Tent camping was a very fun family must.

In about 1957 Bill and Luci opened a boat business operated as "Brewer Boats." They sold and outfitted fishing and ski boats, water skiing accessories and scuba gear. With her design talents, Luci constructed and custom-fit wet suits. She also taught scuba diving and water skiing. In fact, she competed in and won many skiing competitions. Luci was "stunning" on the water. A certified scuba diver, she also taught scuba diving and water skiing.

Sadly, Bill and Luci separated and divorced in the late 1960s.

Luci met Vic Merritt on a blind date in 1965. A year later the couple married on Valentine's Day. After their honeymoon, Luci suffered a massive stroke and was not expected to live. Luci couldn't swallow, she was partially paralyzed, fed by tube and couldn't walk. Although her

progress was doubtful, Luci shocked everyone when she began to heal. Her doctors called it a mystery or miracle, Luci said it was a "heavenly near death experience." Her family jumped with joy. Eventually, Luci recovered to the point that she could walk and her disability was not obvious. To facilitate occupational therapy, Luci took painting lessons.

Brush-in-hand Luci met her new calling... distinguished artist loved by all.

In an interview some time ago, Luci proclaimed: "Art is an important part of my life, not only the ability to make art, but the ability to enjoy it, to live with it. We would all be much poorer in body, mind and spirit without it."

Luci is preceded in death by her husband Victor Merritt. She is survived by her daughters Paula Smoogen (James) and Donna Patterson (Greg). Her devoted sister Patricia Jost. Grandchildren Arie, Sean, Morgan, Todd. Great grandchildren Nathan, Rusty, Payton, Shelby, Synovia, Rowan, Amelia, and Parker.

A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2020 at 12 PM at The Visalia Methodist Church, 5200 W. Caldwell Ave, Visalia, CA 93277

with a reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers donation in Luci's name may be made to Arts Visalia or to your favorite charity.

1. Arts Visalia

<<http://www.artsvisalia.org/about-us>>

214 East Oak Avenue

Visalia, CA 93291

Phone: 559-739-0905

Luci's achievements and contributions (Select)

1983-1996 Luci and Vic owned and operated Merritt Galleries

1986 The Creative Center (member board) The Creative Center Foundation (foundation board)

1998 Visalia Art League (past president and member)

1998 Kings County, Tulare County Art Leagues

1998 Arts Visalia Center (charter board member, co-founder)

1998 Arts Visalia opened its doors.

1998 First recipient Patron Artist Award from Arts Visalia

2001 Vic integral part of the growth of Visalia's art community, Vic passed in 2001

2003 Created Iris banner in the floral collection flown on Visalia city streets in the spring

2002 Sofa Art Show (24 yrs co-founders Varian Mace and Luci Merritt)

Events

MAR **Memorial** 12:00PM

7

Visalia United Methodist Church
5200 W. Caldwell Ave., Visalia, CA, US, 93277