

## MOLLIE SYLVESTER SCHAFFER

06/20/1949 - 07/04/2025

The floodwaters of the Guadalupe River took Mollie Schaffer, 76, on a fatal ride in her beloved sanctuary of Hunt, Texas, in the early morning hours of the 4th of July. Her last act was to ensure that her husband, life partner, and best friend of 58 years, Randy, escaped their sinking car as they sought higher ground. Because of her selflessness, he survived.

Mollie was born to tough-as-nails, Depression Era parents, World War II vet Bob Sylvester ("The Old Soldier"), and no-nonsense nurse Ruth Sylvester ("Ro"). The second of four daughters, Mollie essentially raised her sisters, including a paraplegic older sister, while Bob labored in refineries and Ro worked nonstop at the hospital. Catholic school came to an abrupt end after 8th grade when Mollie declared that she wanted to become a nun, causing Bob and Ro to throw her into public school. That fateful decision would pay off handsomely.

At Westbury High School, Mollie rocked the school with her portrayal of Hedy LaRue in the play, "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," and was voted the "Peanutiest" student because of her hyper-friendly, cheerful disposition. She graduated in 1967 and took a summer job at Texas Children's Hospital, where Ro directed the operating rooms. There she caught a precocious Jewish boy stealing a glance. When she asked what he was looking at, he replied, "Your stethoscope." And off they went.

Pregnant by the summer of 1968—with a marriage to Randy thrown in along the way—Mollie courageously ventured to the grimy streets of Philadelphia, where Randy was starting his sophomore year at the University of Pennsylvania. The cheerfully peanuty Mollie worked as a secretary at the university. In February of 1969, Randy III entered the picture, which required Randy to take on a job in which he had to venture into the rural outskirts of Philly to try to sell encyclopedias to illiterate coal miners.

In no other story does this marriage last much longer.

By the end of the school year, they were exhausted and broke; Philly had lost what little charm it once promised; and a convent looked pretty good in retrospect. They packed their car and moved to Austin, baby in tow, where Randy rapidly finished college and law school at the University of Texas. Mollie worked as a secretary at the university and raised Randy III. If they had an extra dollar at the end of each month, they would splurge on a bag of Fritos and a can of bean dip. The Austin years produced special, long-lasting friendships. Those folks factor into the end of the story.

Law degree in hand in August 1973, Mollie and Randy returned to Houston for Randy to begin his career as a criminal defense lawyer. He quickly found his footing. Josh came along in 1976, completing a family that would give Mollie a lifetime of joy and deep purpose.

Mollie obtained a bachelor's degree in art history from the University of St. Thomas in 1983. She became the director of art education at the Museum of Fine Arts, where she trained the docents. She next dove into volunteering at St. John's School, where Randy III and Josh were students. Having converted to Judaism years earlier—the ultimate rebellion against her Catholic upbringing—she poured her heart and soul into volunteering at Congregation Beth Israel, where she became vice president of the board. Not bad for a born shiksa.

In 1997, Randy III and Cristina's daughter, Sabina, arrived. Josh and Emily brought Jacob into the world in 2010 and Wyatt in 2013. Sabina, Jacob, and Wyatt were the apple of Mollie's twinkling eyes and the highlight of her life. Her orange hair was easy to spot in the bleachers at Jacob's and Wyatt's ballgames, and she shared a most special bond with Sabina. Mollie treasured every moment with them and regaled her



friends with stories of their accomplishments, sweetness, and humor.

But through it all, her union with Randy was her essence. Not the easiest of men—set in his very particular ways—Mollie was thrilled to be along for the ride at every turn. He worked around the clock, but she always received him at home with a hug and a kiss, a homecooked meal, engaging conversation, and an evening of watching TV shows and ballgames or reading books. She suffered by his side through thousands of Rockets, Astros, Oilers, and Rice University games. Few things brought them more happiness than a weeklong trip to New York, where they walked Manhattan top-to-bottom and hit the delis by day and a Broadway play or a ballgame at night. They spent spring breaks in Sarasota, Florida, attending baseball games and walking the beach. No husband could ask for a more loyal companion on such a long ride.

But it was the trips to the Hill Country that they most looked forward to each summer. Their happiest place was a spartan lodge called the River Inn in Hunt that provided the most spectacular swimming and scenery. Randy had gone to Camp Rio Vista down the river and cherished his time there. In 1980, they arranged to reunite with their law school friends at the River Inn, and an annual tradition began. Last week the group met there for the 46th—and last—time.

Mollie spent her final waking moments sitting on the dock by the river with Randy and their friends, showing videos that she had taken of a

gourmet meal that 12-year-old Wyatt had cooked for them a few weeks earlier. Off in the distance, lightening illuminated the horizon and thunder slowly rolled. It is ironic that Mollie drew her last breath in a place that had brought her so much joy for almost 50 years.

Mollie joins her parents, Bob and Ruth Sylvester, and her sister, Patricia Holden. Left behind to figure out how to make do without her are Randy, her husband of 57 years; sons Randy III and wife Cristina, and Josh and wife Emily; grandchildren Sabina, Jacob, and Wyatt; brothers-in-law Don and wife Barbie, and Kent and wife Shara; sisters Jamie Hender-shot and Robin Moreno; and a handful of nephews and nieces.

Mollie is gone, but her peanuty spirit and joie de vivre will live on and surround us until the end of our days. Mollie will guide Sabina's hand when she performs surgery. Mollie will lift Jacob when he elevates for a jump-shot. Mollie will wrap Wyatt with love when he maneuvers around the kitchen baking and cooking. Mollie will protect Randy III and Josh, her cherished sons. But most of all, Mollie will remain by Randy's side, as she has since the summer of 1967. Mollie, Pookie, Mom, Grandmother, Mo: "We love you more."

After a private burial, there will be a memorial service at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, July 13, 2025, at Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 N. Braeswood, Houston, Texas 77096. Instead of flowers or food, please consider making a donation to the Kerr County Flood Relief Fund or a charity of your choice.