



Emily Swan DeLuca

November 28, 1930 - October 30, 2023

A tree falls in the forest ...

On beautiful sun drenched day in Corvallis, OR, a tree fell in the forest, the ground reverberated, and a whisper of love was carried away on a soft breeze. Emily Swan DeLuca was born to Edith and James Swan on November 28, 1930 in Evanston, Illinois. Her parents soon moved her and her two sisters (Nancy and Penny) to a farm (Turtle Valley) in southern Wisconsin. Emily was legally blind in one eye which would hamper her depth perception throughout her life, but never slowed her for a moment. Growing up during the depression and entering junior high school during WWII, Emily became enamored airplanes, pilots, and the war effort. Emily's father, James Swan, owned an airplane and a small airstrip to travel between farming operations. Emily began to learn to fly as a freshman in high school and by age 16 she had soloed and earned her pilot's license. Emily graduated from Delevan Darian High School in 1948 and immediately left for Tennessee where she attended undergraduate school at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. Majoring in chemistry and contemplating medical school, she decided on pursuing a graduate degree in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison ultimately completing her MS degree in 1954. During her graduate program she met fellow biochemistry graduate student, Hector F. DeLuca, fell in love and the two were married the same year as her graduation. Hector was the son of Southern Italian immigrants, which did not fully meet

expectations of Emily's father, leading to some challenges for the young couple, but Emily and Hector's love for each other persevered and they raised four children in Madison, where Hector was employed at UW. Emily was at the center of the family with dinners together every evening and a pursuing a diversity of activities together. The family spent summers sailing their catamaran on Lake Mendota and biking in southern Wisconsin. Long Wisconsin winters were spent skiing including an annual spring trip to the west to visit Hector's parents and ski in Colorado. Emily remained close with her sisters throughout her adult life and all (parents, grand parents, great aunts and uncles, cousins, ...) enjoyed the regular large family gatherings and extended trips. Although Emily had left the lab bench early on to raise her children, her heart, deep sense of empathy, and staunch work ethic led her to volunteer continuously, helping less fortunate children at Head Start, providing meals for elderly via "Meals on Wheels," and serving elderly as a volunteer and board member for Attic Angels just to name a few.

Emily's romantic spirit and passion for adventure blossomed in the 1970s after reading the book: "On The Loose" a travelogue about two brothers that adventured across the west backpacking, playing guitar and reflecting on the condition of society. She purchased and hand sewed backpacking gear for herself and the four kids (then aged 8 – 13) and adventured north (Upper Peninsula of Michigan) and west (mountains of south central Montana and central Idaho) with all four kids in tow for multiday backpacking trips in remote landscapes. The trips became annual summer outings and eventually Hector joined the treks in Montana and Idaho. The trips were riddled with familial love, comedy, hardship, and immeasurable beauty, creating a lasting impact on the entire family, but especially Emily. Divergent interests and pursuits ultimately pulled Hector and Emily apart, leading to divorce in 1987.

The family's inclusive passion for cycling also continued with family members taking extended tours or bike racing. Emily found her niche in time trialing,

where her poor eyesight didn't interfere with success. She was the Wisconsin age graded state champion several years in a row, finishing runner up at the national championships in 1988 and was crowned national champion in 1989. The talent in endurance cycling was strong with all three of the women in the family with multiple podium finishes at nationals for all three and one world title.

In 1992, Emily chose to leave her home, friends and family in Wisconsin to pursue another western adventure. She packed up her house, and alone at age 62 moved to Bozeman, Montana. Here she found her people within the Bozeman Woman's Activities Groups (BWAGs). This adventurous group of like-minded women traveled around the region seeking summer and winter adventures in the mountains. They shared friendship, happiness, and a deep love for the outdoors. A particularly bad bike accident in 1995 put an end to her cycling pursuits and focused her attention on the backcountry. Stories and pictures from weekly day hikes, extended backpack trips, and winter ski tours were regularly shared with the larger family. In Bozeman, Emily's warmth and big heart helped create community all around her. She was active at St James Episcopal church where she served on altar guild for more than 25 years. She continued her pattern of giving back to the community in Bozeman by volunteering at Food Bank (at the time being honored for being the longest serving volunteer at the Bozeman Food Bank), "First Call for Help," as a student CAP mentor at Irving primary school in Bozeman. She was a fixture on Peets Hill in Bozeman and could be seen most every day walking her beloved dogs (most recently Lady Bug) and engaging with others in this close-knit community.

Of all the things in the world that Emily cherished, it was her family. Her kids by this point in her life were adults some now raising their own children in Minnesota, western Montana, and California. Emily would eventually have

nine grandchildren. Holidays together were chaotic and fun. Emily continued to share her love of the outdoors with her now growing family resulting in group hikes, ski outings, and an occasional reunion. In 2020, Emily moved one more time to join her son Tom and his family in Corvallis, OR. She again quickly created community around her and could again be seen out walking 1 – 2 miles every day right up until she fell ill in early September 2023. Emily is survived by her ex-husband Hector, her ‘little sister’ Penny, her four children and nine grandchildren: Cammy (66) and her husband Kevin Flaherty (Campiglia Italy), Jim (64) and his wife Ginny (Saint Paul, MN) and their four children, Eric (Saint Paul), Enzo (Saint Paul), Giulia (Washington DC), and Joe (Saint Paul), Debbie (63) and her husband Eric Dott (Duluth, MN) and their two children, Collin (Madison, WI) and Helena (Duluth, MN), and Tom (61) and his wife Denise (Corvallis, OR) and their three children, Vince (Tromsø, Norway), Emile (San Diego, CA), and Henry (Missoula, MT),.

Emily’s generosity was reflected in her consistent charitable giving. Donations to any number of organizations can be made in Emily’s honor, a few examples of her regular recipients of support include: The Nature Conservancy; National Public Radio; Yellowstone Public Radio; Oregon Public Radio; American Indian Education Fund; Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Tribute Wall

BO

“ I was a graduate student in Hector DeLica’s lab at the University of Wisconsin and loved interacting with the DeLuca family. I’ve exchanged Christmas cards with Emily through the years. My condolences to Emily’s family. Maybe you remember me and my wife, Darlene, who passed in October 2020. My memories of you as children are full of joy. I’m proud to see your accomplishments. God bless you all, Love, Burt Olson

Burt Olson - January 19, 2025 at 10:16 PM

DC

“ hi I am D’Ann Caron and I used to hike with Emily in the early 90s . She was one of my favorite hikers when I hiked with the BWAGS, she was such a sweet and gentle soul and I enjoyed her so much. I just now found out that she had passed last year and I’m so sorry to hear it
much love to her family.

d’Ann Caron - August 28, 2024 at 11:05 AM

ZB

“ I got to know Emily first as a young legislative candidate knocking on her door. She was always so kind and supportive to me, and over the course of six years and three campaigns, I developed the habit of stopping by her house when I was walking through her neighborhood - mostly just to say hello and experience her warmth and kindness. And her dog was a delight too. We talked about her son Tom, who was the Dean of the University of Montana Forestry School at the time, my Alma matter. And we would talk about the environment as a policy priority, and about expanding programs to help vulnerable people stay on their feet. The last time I saw her was at the foodbank, of course, where she was practically famous as a regular volunteer.

I just saw her obituary in the Chronicle and wanted to stop by here and say that I am such of big fan of Emily. She was so kind and giving, and she made my life better in tangible ways, even as a relatively distant acquaintance. I think about her every time I pass the site of her Bozeman home on south 8th. Sending big love to her family, who are most likely as big hearted and kind as Emily was.

Zach Brown - November 21, 2023 at 09:47 AM

PA

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Emily's passing. I walked with her and Lady Bug many, many times over the years on Peets Hill in Bozeman. She was a lovely lady, my sincerest condolences.

Pam - November 17, 2023 at 06:48 PM

SB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Susie Becker - November 09, 2023 at 06:06 PM