



Bethany Henley Cavano

OCT 12, 1952 - MAY 8, 2024



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Bethany Alison Henley Cavano, 71, of Tallahassee has passed away this 8th day of May 2024 at Miracle Hill Nursing and Rehabilitation Center where she resided at the end of her life's journey.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama on October 12, 1952, to Wesley Henley Jr. and Polly Philips Henley (Metcalf), legend holds that Bethany was, in fact, born singing. With their father, a jazz trumpeter, and their mother, a writer and published poet, Bethany and her sisters Jan and Susan were surrounded with literature, music, dance, and theater from their earliest years. Her formative education was spent in the Homewood and Mountain Brook school systems, graduating from Mountain Brook High School in 1970. It was there that her love for the arts and music matured along with her own unique voice in local choirs at school and church. At Birmingham Southern College Bethany studied Fine Arts ultimately graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Theater.

Through theater, Bethany met the love of her life, Thomas Cavano. They married in 1981 and welcomed two children; a daughter, Aurora Megan and a son, Brendan Erinn before they relocated to Tallahassee, Florida in 1985. Bethany thrived in motherhood and cherished her children above all else. Although the marriage would later dissolve, Bethany and Thomas remained lifelong friends and gracefully co-parented their children into adulthood.

Bethany's stepfather Charlie Metcalfe, producer of his own production company Metcalfe Films, supported Polly and her girls and was instrumental in launching and inspiring Bethany's career. Bethany established and ran her own company, Cavano Production Service. First in Birmingham and later in Tallahassee, Bethany balanced an intense dedication to her family with an industrious career in film, stage, television, and radio performance and production.

A versatile performer, Bethany appeared both on film and stage. Her first feature film experience at age 15 was in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. (It was Alan Arkin's performance of a deaf mute in this film that first inspired Bethany to pursue her acting career.) She later earned her SAG



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eligibility in the Bob Rafelson film, *Stay Hungry* working with Jeff Bridges, Sally Field and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Other film credits include the title role in *Elizabeth*, a dramatic short broadcast nationally on PBS and FSU Film School thesis films *Lena's Spaghetti* and *Watching*. At age 14, Bethany was a member of the inaugural class of the drama department at the Alabama School of Fine Arts. Bethany appeared in numerous stage productions, notably *The Mikado* at FSU, *Our Town* at TCC, the annual professional production of Nucleus Entertainment Group's *A Christmas Carol on the Air*, and in her final stage appearance, with her own granddaughters Lily and Aurora in their debut stage appearance in *A Christmas Carol* at Theatre Tallahassee. As a producer, Bethany's body of work is vast and includes episodes for television series such as *Unsolved Mysteries* and *Rescue 911*, medical television productions for Lifetime and the University of Alabama, award-winning documentaries, and commercial advertisements. She was also a legislative reporter, covering the Florida House of Representatives for Florida Public Television.

Those who know her remember most about Bethany; she was breathtakingly beautiful, with a brilliant smile, incredible laugh, and a bright and kind spirit. Bethany was blessed with many talents and special skills; gardening and plant care, design (floral and interior), dialects of all kinds, singing (classical, jazz, country, etc), guitar, Spanish, competitive running, kayaking and canoeing, skiing (snow and water), swimming, horseback riding, yoga, dancing (all kinds), character voices, and tears (on command). She was a decent cook although she put raisins and pineapple in most things. She was a notorious cat lady and an excellent caretaker of her many, many beloved furbabies. With her carefully curated eclectic friend circle, Bethany loved to go to the theater, especially to see films and local community productions and was a worthy adversary at Scrabble. She was an avid listener and supporter of public radio and a regular voice on-air during WFSU's fundraising drives.

Next to "Mom", "Granny Beth" was Bethany's favorite name to be called as each of her adoring grandchildren learned what it meant to be truly cherished and well fed. Together they enjoyed excursions to Lake Ella by way of the Black Dog Cafe, to visit the ducks and climb the tired oak tree; to potlucks and fireside singalongs with friends at the Miccosukee Land Co-op; endless hours of playing in the yard, PBS Kids programming, and abundant amounts of Morning Star vegetarian bacon.

Singing was Bethany's most favorite hobby. In addition to membership in choirs including Independent Presbyterian Church (B'ham), Tallahassee Community Chorus, Voces Angelorum,



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and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee choir, Bethany was most happy when singing with Doug and the Enablers and the Morbid Table Napkin Choir, at the Florida Folk Festival, or at any time or any place a song was needed. Her beautiful voice was a gift to all.

Bethany was an activist, social justice warrior, and environmentalist. In the 60s, her family hosted freedom riders during the Civil Rights Movement in Birmingham. Later in highschool, she would be disciplined for wearing pants under her skirt in protest of the school's sexist dress code. Bethany was active in both Obama campaigns. She ate organic and was (mostly) vegetarian, reused and recycled everything, and rescued countless animals. To litter was to sin.

Bethany was a warrior. Through most of her life, Bethany lived and struggled with bi-polar disorder and recurrent episodes of depression. Though her illness crippled her in many ways, she learned to manage it as best she could and always held onto hope. Bethany was a breast cancer survivor and ultimately conquered Alzheimer's disease which stole her mind and her body, but could never overcome her spirit.

Bethany was preceded in death by her father Wesley Walter Henley Jr. (Marie) and mother Polly Philips Henley Metcalfe (Charlie), Aunt Josephine Dobbs (Carney), sister Jan Meredith, and her son Brendan Erinn Cavano. She is survived by her sister Susan Beaty, nieces Jamie Keith (Matthew) and Abby Beaty, two great nieces, and Bethany's beloved grandchildren Lily, Aurora, and Sebastian; her dear cousins, and her many beloved friends who were as family. Finally, she is survived by her daughter, Aurora Megan Cavano (Jonathan Rogers), who was her heart and caretaker to the very last.

A service followed by a reception will be held on Saturday, June 8, 2024 at 4:00pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee at 2810 N. Meridian Road in Tallahassee.

As a talented floral designer with an uncanny green thumb, Bethany welcomed any gift of flowers. You can otherwise honor Bethany's memory and legacy by donating your time and resources to public radio, the Tallahassee Humane Society, a third term for President Obama, or to the cultivation of the arts in your community as this was her lifelong passion and pursuit.

Bethany was a spring from which compassion and love poured forth to all who were blessed enough to have known her. Let her be an example to us all how we ought to be towards one



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another in our lives and endeavors. May we be a people who love unceasingly - living with intensity and passion - who always cling to hope.





Events


Bethany Henley Cavano

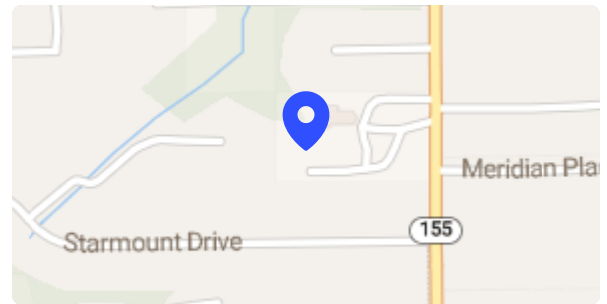
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Memorial Service

 **Saturday**, June 8, 2024

 4:00 PM ET

 **Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee**
2810 N. Meridian Rd., Tallahassee FL 32303





Tribute Wall

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John McClure posted:

Such a beautifully crafted obituary, Aurora. Bethany and I dated as juniors and seniors in high school and enjoyed drama productions and singing in choirs together. What fabulous bright light she was! I also remember hours of fun at their home on Locksley Drive in Mountain Brook; and working with her stepdad Charlie Metcalf on the music soundtracks for a few commercials and films he produced, and listening to Polly read her wonderful poetry. Her family was a creative force!

December 3 at 5:49 AM



Nathan Hipps posted:

I will always remember the fun times we had while casting films and commercials or location scouting. Those were some great years and I had so much fun working with Beth. Rest in peace and power dear friend. Much love to Beth and her family.

July 10 at 9:56 AM



Ludy Goodson posted:

There is a moment when the heart hesitates. That was today in reading about Beth and the beautifully composed summary of her life. To Beth's family and friends, I give my heartfelt sadness and sympathy. I remember Beth with her high energy and spirit when we were together in shows at Tallahassee Little Theatre and singing at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee. That is the Beth I shall keep in my memories. With love, Ludy Goodson

June 11 at 8:18 AM



Paula Griffin posted:

Aurora, I share my condolences and my prayers for your family during this time. May God give you the peace that passes all understanding and take your family through this period of grief.

May 14 at 4:27 PM



William (Bill) Marx June 8 at 5:46 PM

I enjoyed reading Beth's O'bit. My birthday is July 8, 1952. I knew Beth from classes and plays at Mountain Brook High School. We married (different people) in the same year. I have a daughter whose middle name is Megan and my mom died of Alziemers Diease. My cousin Linda did as well last year. She was a classmate of Beth's.I am almost 72 next month and happy to be alive and rather healthy.I have a Tennessee Walking Hors named Libby. Also, I have 5 grandchildren and feel that I am better for knowing Beth. May she rest in peace.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Bethany by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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