
Sandy Kogl



Sandy Kogl (nee Holloway), 67, of Talkeetna died of ALS Sept. 13, 2010, at home, surrounded by family and friends.

A celebration of life will be at 3 p.m. Sept. 26 at the Sheldon Community Arts Hangar, with potluck finger foods afterward. In lieu of flowers, please send donations in care of Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union to "Sandy's Circle," a newly formed group dedicated to providing support to caregivers in the Talkeetna area.

Sandy was born Aug. 15, 1943, in Hastings, Neb.

A childhood in California ranch country inspired Sandy to join 4-H to raise horses and livestock and compete in rodeo events.

After graduating from UC Davis in zoology, Sandy "came into the country" in 1964 and enrolled in a graduate degree program in wildlife management at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. While there, she married Dennis Kogl; they moved up the Yanert River to homestead and run a sled dog freighting operation. Both of her children, Renge' and Leif, were born in Fairbanks and had their first dog sled rides back to the homestead when just 10 days old.

Sandy's experience with sled dogs led her in 1975 to Denali National Park's kennels, where she was hired to revitalize backcountry dog sled patrols, improve the breeding program and renovate the facility. There she wrote the book "Sled Dogs of Denali." Sandy became a park ranger at a time when few women were hired as rangers. She supervised the backcountry ranger program and mentored seasonal rangers, many of whom became lifelong friends.

Sandy's marriage ended in 1978. A decade later she met George Wagner, her life partner.

Soon after she retired in 1995, Sandy and George moved to their Talkeetna cabin to be closer to Sandy's aging mother, Mitzie. Recognizing a growing bear problem in Talkeetna, Sandy and her close friend Diane Okonek founded the Bear Necessities Coalition with the goal of keeping bears wild and people safe. She wrote "The Ballad of the Wild Bear" with friends Pat Chamberlin and Libby Hatton to help children learn about living safely in bear country.

Sandy is known for her dedication to preserving wild places, protecting animals, educating people about the natural world and treading softly on the land. She was often seen walking the bike trail waving fireweed and poppy stalks to spread seeds, picking up trash and bird watching. She was an avid gardener and greatly enjoyed hosting lively gatherings in her home. She loved adventuring in Alaska's backcountry by dog sled, skis and canoe.

Sandy is survived by her partner, George; daughter, Renge' Lee Grace and her partner Mark Waters of Bend, Ore.; and her son, Leif Mitchell Kogl, his wife Elva and their daughter Juno Itzel of San Francisco, Calif.

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