



Sandra Ellen Helin

October 23, 1963 - March 26, 2026

Sandra Ellen Helin

Some people spend a lifetime collecting possessions;
Sandra spent a lifetime collecting adventures.

1963 - 2026

Sandra Helin, a woman of grace, grit, and genuine warmth — a gifted communicator, a fearless adventurer, and a generous soul -- passed away at 62 in Tallahassee, Florida.

Sandra grew up in Southern Maryland, just outside of Washington, D.C. She had an early gift for communication and a natural stage presence. She starred in her first community theatre performance at the age of five and went on to excel in dance, public speaking, beauty pageantry and equestrian competitions throughout high school.

She studied advertising and public relations at both Florida State University and the University of South Florida.

Her work ultimately landed her in Austin, Texas, a city she dearly loved. She was convinced she was born a Texan. It just took her a while to get there.

Shortly after moving to Austin, friends pushed her to apply to a leading talent

agency in Austin. They placed her in their portfolio book of talent on the page opposite the then-unknown Matthew McConaughey. She ultimately landed a couple of small advertising and television roles --just one of her many fascinating career paths – but she liked to joke that she once ‘starred opposite Mathew McConaughey’.

Sandra spent twenty years working for the Southwestern Insurance Information Service (SIIS) in Austin, first serving as Public Affairs Director and then President of the non-profit. She provided consumers, legislators, regulators, and the media across Texas and Oklahoma information on all facets of insurance and was a go-to media source during natural disasters.

She loved new experiences and was a fearless traveler. Some of her most cherished travels were with husband Wally Helin. They hiked the Grand Canyon multiple times. They cruised the Baltic Sea. They visited London, Paris, Normandy, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Berlin, Helsinki, and St. Petersburg. They even ventured to Moscow to see Lenin’s tomb and Red Square.

Sandra and Wally were married in the Little White Wedding Chapel in Las Vegas. They shared a love of culture, history, good food and fine wine. Though their path together changed, their bond never did. Wally remained her family, her confidante, her best friend and one of the greatest gifts of her life.

Sandra loved the water and spent countless hours boating on Lake Travis in Austin. She became an accomplished sailor and raced with the Lakewood Yacht Club. She graduated to offshore racing and crewed trimarans several times in the Harvest Moon Regatta, an annual overnight race from Galveston to near Corpus Christi along the Texas Coast.

In 2014, she closed up her house and spent nearly two years traveling aboard

her beloved 'Irregardless', a 42-foot Beneteau sailboat with her co-captain Ray Schull.

They documented their voyages thru the Keys, the Bahamas, along the Intracoastal Waterway and beyond in their sailing blog, No Agenda (<https://www.sailblogs.com/member/noagenda>). Their entries captured the joy, humor, simplicity and occasional chaos of life at sea.

Sandra returned to Tallahassee to help care for her mother during an extended illness.

She had a big heart for animals believing every animal deserved to be loved, whether they came with pedigreed papers or a unknown past.

She found a half starved hunting dog with a dislocated hip while traveling in Mississippi, bought him home, nursed him back to health and spared no expense to get him the surgery he needed to repair his hip. Sandra and Buddy were inseparable until her unexpected death.

Sandra played piano and a little guitar and had recently begun experimenting with AI music recording programs. She created Buddy's Song, an incredibly touching tribute to her rescue and her rescuer.

Buddy's Song is on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/Y7HPfOvil>) and Suno (<https://suno.com/s/6KhPX2Y5Nv6N5wZC>).

She will be desperately missed by her only sister, Lynda Russell Woodard. Though often separated by distance, they remained inseparable in all the ways that mattered most. They were each other's first friend, fiercest defender and witness to every chapter in each other's lives. No matter what, they loved

each other unconditionally.

Sandra is also survived by her brother-in-law L.A. Woodard and extended family, Rick and Barbara Ballard and Brianna and Blake Mullenix.

Sandra was predeceased by her parents, Clayton Russell and Pauline Russell Frederick.

Sandra leaves behind a legacy of public service, a lifetime of remarkable experiences, and a community of colleagues, friends and acquaintances who were fortunate to know her. And she was surely met with pounding hoofs, wagging tails, and wet kisses as she stepped across the Rainbow Bridge.

In her memory, please consider contributions to the Best Friends Animal Society (https://bestfriends.org/?form=FUNLJQZPGEN&gclid=CjwKCAjwqazPBhALEiwAOuXqdJkvzjjoN3A67cfMOIEvLNDQ3Xg92Fpikyof-Ui1VXKDbzP_DD6mRoC65EQAvD_BwE), St. Francis Wildlife Rescue (<https://www.stfranciswildlife.org/copy-of-support-our-work>), or the Humane Society (https://secure.humaneworld.org/page/160634/donate/1?ea.tracking.id=ad_gg_slink_donate_today&en_txn10=ad_gg_cpc_22208041909_175570862618_731982232270_humane%20society%20international&en_og_source=ad_gg_fndr_160634_hwfa&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22208041909&gclid=CjwKCAjwqazPBhALEiwAOuXqdEeqir5oEyjawd8QFY-ydDeYwpKYktV2JbPkoy4mGaOA45tqy4S7aBoCxhwQAvD_BwE's) International effort to rescue animals in war torn areas.

Ashli McCall, of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com) has the honor of assisting Sandra's family with arrangements.

Tribute Wall



“ *Bevis Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Sandra Ellen Helin*



Bevis Funeral Home - April 24 at 02:58 PM



“ *I met Sandra out near my mailbox one day when she was walking Buddy, her rescue dog. He was her life. She enjoyed taking him to the dog park nearby. We often exchanged foods we purchased at Publix when we had extras. Once I picked her up from the emergency room and she stayed with me a few days. Sandra went to church with me one Sunday at Bradfordville First Baptist. We talked about salvation. Later I urged her to ask Jesus into her heart and receive the Holy Spirit to live within her. She said that she had done that. I am so thankful because I have peace knowing she is with Jesus in paradise. I am already missing her smiling face. Carol Hinson, 3264 Horseshoe Tr.*

Carol Hinson - May 09 at 04:52 PM