



Ms. Louise Brooke

November 5, 1947 - May 2, 2025

Artist, educator, and adventurer, Louisa Brooke left her childhood home in Lenox for the last time on Friday morning, May 2, 2025. During her 10-month struggle with Multiple Myeloma, her focus was always on others.

The oldest child of Louisa and John L.B. Brooke, she was born in Pittsfield, on November 5, 1947. Her childhood was spent in Lenox, New York City, Sicily and Rome. She graduated from Foxcroft School in 1965 and Rhode Island School of Design in 1969.

Her creativity and social awareness were kindled by her first job working in a lower Manhattan sweatshop with immigrant women, making paper flowers.

Another early job, dog walking, led her to a high-end hand-printed fabric company, Tillett Textile Design, on the upper East Side. Through Leslie and Doris Tillett, she landed in war-torn and cyclone devastated Bangladesh.

Catholic Organization for Relief and Rehabilitation had contacted the Tilletts to give design advice to a fledgling organization, the Jute Works. The mission was to create handicraft employment for women in Dacca and deep into the countryside. What was meant to be a short-term consultancy became a four-year commitment from 1972-1976.

Louisa was energized by sights, sounds, smells, and sweat of new and unfamiliar settings. She fearlessly worked in places where she was challenged linguistically. She enjoyed life among ordinary people in obscure places. But she came home to Lenox in the late 1990s to care for her mother, Louisa Ludlow Brooke in her old family house on Main Street.

Louisa had strong sense of duty and also a gift for helping people in need. She worked tirelessly as a GED teacher in the Navaho community in Farmington, New Mexico, and as a pre-school special-ed teacher in Theroux and Albuquerque.

In 2016, in her late-sixties, Louisa took off on a new, challenging adventure on the troubled Thai-Myanmar border. The Minnemahaw Higher Education Program offered a crash one-year GED prep course to a selected group of smart, motivated young people, mostly of Karen background. The students came from refugee camps and migrant villages along the border. Another short-term commitment turned into a seven-year one, teaching through the COVID era. Louisa returned from Mae Sot to Lenox in November 2022.

She is survived by her siblings Nini Gilder (and her husband George), John Brooke (and his wife Sara Balderston) and Jim Brooke (and his wife Phan "Pen" Soy), and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and great nephews.

She had a special affinity with her youngest nephew George Brooke, her last student. We will miss her greatly.

A family memorial service will be planned at a future date. Contributions in Louisa's memory can be made to The American Indian College Fund or Minnemahaw Higher Education Program through Child's Dream Foundation, with a note designating "Louisa Brooke - MHEP."

Tribute Wall

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“ my condolences to the family and friends of louise brooke. i did not know her, but just reading her obituary is deeply moving. she gave of herself in every way across the planet, something pure and rare in today's world. my heart goes out to you and i know she will be in your memories, and hearts always. i will keep her in my music. in spirit and music, royal hartigan

royal hartigan - May 12, 2025 at 12:11 PM