



Elisabeth "Beth" Grams Haxby

July 28, 1949 - January 29, 2023

Beth Grams Haxby died on January 29, 2023, at home in Northampton. She left behind a legacy of care as a loving mother and grandmother, a teacher, a sleep and parenting consultant and a leader in her neighborhood. Beth was born on July 28, 1949, in Chicago, and grew up moving around the Midwest. Her father Armin Grams, a professor of Human Development, taught the gamut from child development to gerontology, and her mother Norma was also a teacher. These models shaped her life and her work.

In the summer of 1969, when her father was teaching on sabbatical in Germany, Beth and her new college boyfriend Bob set out on a Europe-on-\$5-a-day tour. After a short stay with her family, they spent two months hitchhiking through Europe. Beth and Bob stayed in pensiones and occasionally slept outside, and subsisted on bread and sausage, produce from markets, and local wine. One of many adventures was on the Balkan Express to Istanbul when they were detained by Bulgarian Border Control but helped through by three Syrian medical students they'd befriended.

The year after this adventure, and still in college, Beth married Bob in August 1970. She often remarked that she and Bob were children when they were married so young, leaving them to grow up together. Her parents celebrated them all summer before the wedding with frequent champagne toasts. Ever after, Beth made celebratory toasts a part of her everyday life. Her family, her friends, and whoever they happened to be sharing a meal with could almost

always count on Beth offering love and appreciation before clinking glasses. She studied sociology, earning a BA at Carleton College in Minnesota and went on to get a BS in education from the University of Minnesota and a M.Ed. at Smith College. She taught in preschool and elementary school over a long career. Beth is remembered by the families and students at the Smith College Campus School as a devoted teacher who always believed that the emotional development of children in her care mattered more than any day's lesson plan. After her mother died and made a bequest to the Campus School, she used that and wrote a grant to begin a Grandparents Day event there to honor the work of special elders and connect them with their grandchildren's education.

She raised two children, Mikael and Sara, who were in Northampton with her at the time of her death. Predeceased by her brother Paul, she is also survived by her husband Bob, daughter- and son-in-law Liz and Derrick and grandson Sam, brothers Jim and John, and an extensive network of friends in town. Never afraid to ask difficult questions or start involved, intimate conversations, Beth took her friendships seriously and always made evident her care for her friends. In retirement, she and Bob moved to the Village Hill community, where she became a social leader. She organized fundraising for a new playground, developed a series of presentations on the history of Village Hill, and initiated Friday evening "cocktails on the curb" to maintain social connection with their friends and neighbors.

Beth had a lifelong passion for singing choral music and was rarely happier than when she would practice and perform with the Hampshire Choral Society. For many years she was a dedicated board member of HCS, spearheading their fundraising until her illness.

Together, Beth and Bob traveled extensively in her beloved VW camper van. After tent camping for years, the van provided the means for their young family to take a coast-to-coast road trip. Even in the rain, they could have pizza or play pinochle, all sitting at the cozy inside table in the back. A strong hiker, Beth loved the Rocky Mountains and also section-hiked up and down

the Appalachian Trail, completing the A.T. from Connecticut through Vermont with Bob.

Upon her retirement, Beth undertook to create a new career for herself as a sleep and parenting consultant. She had seen as a teacher how important sleep was to children's well-being and how often school and parent schedules made it hard for children to get the rest they need. To translate this insight into actual support for individual children, Beth dove into the academic and medical body of knowledge on children's sleep to become a self-taught expert. She reviewed the popular literature and the academic debates to synthesize a clear position from which she would advocate for children and families. Beginning with presentations delivered to local schools and healthcare professionals, she took her material and presented at national conferences for early childhood educators. As a sleep consultant for families with very young children, she created individually tailored care plans for hundreds of families. Her sleep-coaching clients, both regional and nationwide, benefitted from her legendary success rate.

Her children liked to joke that Beth had done the impossible and created a new career out of her greatest love, telling people how to parent their children, and made it a valuable service to the community. More than anything else, she took her intellectual passions and her drive to learn, and she made them the means by which she could make children's lives better.

Beth knew her heart, and it guided her life. She leaves a legacy of care, friendship, and fierce critical intelligence. We miss her very much.

Beth asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the Southern Poverty Law Center (<https://splcenter.org>) and CDH VNA Hospice (<https://giving.vnaandhospice.org>).

All services will be private and at the convenience of the family. DROZDAL FUNERAL HOME of Northampton has been entrusted with her care. For more information, or to leave the family a personal message, please visit Drozdalfuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall

ME

“ I am so sorry to read of Beth’s death. While I did not keep in touch with her over the years, I have fond memories of her, as well as Sara and Mikael, in our ‘baby group’ days, and always enjoyed running into her around town. I remember her birthday gift to my first son Ben when I was pregnant with Jake; a lovely black and white photo book about welcoming a new sibling into the family. I also valued her advice about poetry books for children. I am sure her life will continue to have meaning and resonance in the memories of her family and friends.

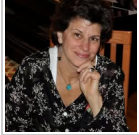
Melissa Greenspan

Melissa - February 24, 2023 at 10:56 AM

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“ Beth was a quiet force-of-nature. As the lovely obituary revealed, she was always creating and delivering new ways to support the growth of resilience and strength in others. It was so delightful having her as our neighbor during the years we lived several doors down the street from Bob, Beth, Mikael, and Sara. When my middle-school daughter misplaced her key to enter the house after school before I returned from work, she knew exactly which neighbor to approach for help in hoisting her into the house via a back unlocked window. Beth was a comfort to my daughters - somewhat like the neighborhood aunties in some traditional neighborhoods. In turn, both of my daughters enjoyed babysitting Mikael and Sara as youngsters. May Beth's loving spirit live in all of our hearts. And may the memories of this amazing woman bring some solace and pride to Mikael, Sara, and Bob.

Carol Owen - February 24, 2023 at 09:47 AM



“ *I am so sorry to read of Beth's passing. I remember fondly her smile and sharing our Minnesota roots. And times together at Campus School when the kids were little. I hope her memory brings you all peace and comfort.*

Lori Divine-Hudson

Lori Divine-Hudson - February 24, 2023 at 07:55 AM