

We mourn the passing of Sigrun Corrigan
President, Board of Governing Trustees of Ballet San Jose
April 25, 1938 – June 26, 2008

Sigrun Corrigan peacefully succumbed to liver failure as a result of her two-year battle with breast cancer last Thursday evening.

Sigrun was born in the small Norwegian Fjord town of Nesna, on the edge of the arctic circle. The family later moved to the third largest city in Norway, Trondheim. Sigrun's mother, Johanne, was a grammar school teacher, and her father was appointed by the Norwegian government as a representative to maintain the traditional crafts and heritage of the Northern sector of Norway.



She set off to London in the late 1950s to pursue a modeling career and to work as an "au Pair". She met Wilfred, in February of 1960 while she was a final year student at the Imperial College of London. Wilf proposed in May as he was leaving for his first job with a Massachusetts company, Transitron, in early June. Brother Arnt, was the only member of the Walla family to visit his sister during that period in London, and give the "OK" to Sigrun's boyfriend. Sigrun returned to Norway to live with her parents, and await her US visa. In December 1960 she traveled to Boston. They were married in the small Boston suburb of Lynnfield. Within days of the marriage they flew to Phoenix, Arizona, where Wilf would take a job with Motorola. They settled in Paradise Valley and had four children.

In 1968 the Corrigan family moved to Silicon Valley where Wilfred would take a job as a Division manager with Fairchild Semiconductor. Wilfred subsequently became President and CEO of Fairchild in 1974.

Sigrun pursued her interests in art and design throughout her life. She was a painter, photographer and a designer. She often would sketch drawings of dresses, furniture, and houses. She specifically was interested in how the color of clothing and cosmetics related to each individual. She worked with "Suzanne", who was the inventor of color analysis. She met with hundreds of clients to determine the colors which looked best on them, and helped them manage their wardrobe. She continued her passion for design by decorating, and eventually building houses. Sigrun has had homes in Atherton, San Francisco, Los Altos Hills, Trondheim and London. Her favorite creation was Villa Serena, her current home in Los Altos Hills.

In the mid 80s the Corrigan Family set up the Corrigan Walla Foundation. Sigrun has been President of the Foundation from inception. The Foundation has focused on the Arts, and the developmentally disabled. Going forward, more emphasis will be placed on cancer research.

Sigrun was a sponsor of the Arts. In 1986 Sigrun began her over 20 year involvement with the "San Jose/Cleveland Ballet", now "Ballet San Jose" and Ballet San Jose SCHOOL. Sigrun was a champion for Ballet San Jose, initially chairing such events as the annual Gala and until recently, at the request of the Board Chairman, John Fry, carried the title of President of Board of Governing Trustees. She was proud to note that over 1,000,000 people have attended ballets performed by Ballet San Jose. Her personal favorite was "Blue Suede Shoes". She participated in its creation and was, in part, responsible for the PBS filming of the ballet in 1997.

Sigrun was also delighted with the recent success of the Ballet's Goodwill Tour of China this spring. Her last visit with the company was before take off, where she toasted and congratulated the entire cast, Nahat and Fry for "a dream come true." She was so proud. Traveling in John Fry's private 747, the company performed in eight major cities and although news of the tour

came to her almost daily, she was disappointed that she could not travel with them, as originally planned.

Sigrun loved to entertain. She loved to throw parties for her friends and Wilfred's business associates. A birthday, an anniversary, Christmas, all were great reasons to celebrate! She loved these events, and being the hostess. She often would roll out a red carpet at the front door to affirm that each event was a grand occasion. Known for throwing surprise parties, on Nahat's last birthday (February 20, 2008) Sigrun held the press conference at her home for Ballet San Jose's China tour announcement and had a large cake in his honor with Chinese fireworks on top!

Sigrun loved to travel. She raised her children with annual trips to Europe or elsewhere. She would often return to Norway, visit her retreat in London, or "The World", a private Residential ship which travels around the planet. She discovered this ship even before it was built, and purchased an apartment on the top floor, right at the front of the ship. As it was constructed in her home town of Trondheim, she toured the ship during construction. Sigrun became a citizen of the United States in the 1990s but never forgot her Norwegian heritage. She would often return to her childhood friends and family in Norway, and have her Norwegian friends and family visit her in California. She was actively involved with the San Francisco Norwegian Consulate, and with the Norwegian American Cultural Society. In 1999 she held a grand party for the Crown Prince Harald to celebrate his recent graduation from UC Berkeley.

Sigrun was a friend. She cared. Those who knew her, knew they could always call upon her for support in times of need, and advice when troubled. She was a listener. Wherever she went, she spoke to everyone as a friend, and in return people would regard her as their friend. She not only had a Joie de vivre for herself, she gave it to others, as well.

Sigrun was an amazing grandmother. Her first grandchild was Claudia. Sigrun would drive Claudia to ballet classes at Ballet San Jose weekly. While the total quickly grew to seven grandchildren, Sigrun was sure to have an intimate connection with each. She preferred to see them individually so she could really focus her time. She would always have a plan, an activity, a craft, or an objective. She brought pictures of each child with her wherever she went. She never traveled without sending postcards and returning loaded with gifts. Her grandchildren, who called her "Grammy", will miss her warm laugh, hugs and praise.

The last two years since Sigrun has been diagnosed with breast cancer have been challenging. Consistent with her personality, her strength, and her optimism, she battled cancer hard, and gave it a great fight. She was a champion. She kept her cool demeanor and positive outlook throughout. She was never daunted by the difficulties of her treatment.

Despite rigorous drug treatments she continued her travel plans. In 2007 she made 4 trips to Europe, including Russia, Scandinavia, Greece and the Baltic. In September she flew to London to attend a private dinner with Prince Edward at Buckingham Palace. In February of this year she managed London, Paris, and a Safari in South Africa, while on 'The World'.

Sigrun was fortunate to have the best care possible. She was very pleased with her 2-year relationship and treatment with her doctor Alice (Ellie) Guardino, and the staff at Stanford. Ellie has been more than a doctor, she has been a friend to Sigrun throughout. The fight against cancer will remain a part of the Corrigan family.

This past two years were very full for Sigrun; she was very realistic about the probable outcome, but took advantage of every minute. She was there for the birth of her 7th grandchild, and was still going strong at her 70th (also known as the 140th) birthday party for her and husband Wilfred held on April 25th.

On June 26th, the world lost one incredible person. She will be forever in our hearts. Those who

knew Sigrun loved her. She was always so full of grace, style and optimism. She will be celebrated for years by all of us whose lives she touched. She is survived by Wilfred Corrigan, her husband, her children Elsa, Sean, Chris, and Erik, as well as her daughter-in-laws Lauren, Courtenay, and Stephanie. Her beloved grandchildren are Claudia, Ingrid, Drake, Lawton, William, Mila, and Robert. Also surviving her are her loving Norwegian siblings Arnt, Svein, and Berit, and Wilfred's sister Sandra.