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Marsha L. Downey, daughter of Clara Jean (Grubb) and George E. Downey, died on September 16, 2019, after a long battle with ovarian cancer.

Born in December 1958 in Nashville TN, she moved with her family to Westford MA in the fall of 1967. She attended Westford public schools, graduating from Westford Academy in 1977. While in school, she developed a love of weaving, drawing, and macramé, and blossomed in the art classes of gifted teacher Joan Longobardi. From 1977-1980 she worked at the Roudenbush Community Center pre-school, coordinating arts & crafts activities for the children. There, she developed a love of children's art. She took classes with local potters Jane Hinckley of Westford, and MFA teacher David Davison at Federal Furnace Pottery in Dunstable MA. In 1978 she took a quilting class with Sally Palmer Field of Chelmsford, and went on a quilters' bus trip to Shelburne Museum in VT. This was to spark a life-long love of quilting, which eventually spanned 50 years, and resulted in over 250 quilts, some of which appeared in shows and magazines over the years.

She attended Penland School of Crafts in western NC twice, first for a concentration in ceramics, and later for textile design, thanks to a scholarship obtained with the help of Paulus Berensohn. Once there, she was his classroom assistant. From 1981-1984 she worked for Middlesex Savings Bank, marrying Robert F. Lyons in November of 1984. In 1985 she went to work for a defense contractor, Assurance Technology Corp., where she worked in Government Contracts and Accounting until 2015. For several years she was a board member of the Chelmsford Quilters Guild, and The Feedsack Club.

In 1998 she and her husband Rob moved from North Chelmsford to Littleton MA. In 2002 she went on a Quilters' Excursion bus trip to Lancaster PA with her mother, where they enjoyed Amish cooking, fabric shopping, and antique quilts at the large annual quilt show in Lancaster. In 2008 she did a series of paper garden collages, the off-shoot of an earlier series of garden quilts. From 2015 to 2018 she worked for Analog Devices Inc. as a Contract Administrator, until forced to retire due to ill health.

Throughout her creative life, she was heavily influenced by the philosophies and techniques that arose from Black Mountain College, as several of her mentors and teachers had deep roots there. Working with "chance" as a creative tool was one such example. She developed her own philosophy of art in the universal context, and the importance of seeing the "connections" between objects and events in our daily lives. In accordance with the teachings of Black Mountain instructor M.C. Richards, she believed strongly in the renaissance "generalist", and the importance of using our entire spectrum of talents and abilities during one's lifetime. She spent her entire career working to achieve this balance.

Life-long interests included: Old movies, history, vintage fabrics and antiques, archaeology, wildlife and nature, needlework of all kinds, ceramics, genealogy research and regional studies, quilting, folk art collecting and outsider art.

Marsha is pre-deceased by: her mother Jean, father George, brother Doug and brother-in-law Noel D. Rainville. She is survived by: her loving and devoted husband Rob, siblings Ellen, Neil, and Gregg, sister-in-law Joyce, nieces Leah and Kala Downey, and extended Lyons family.

Calling hours will be held: Saturday, November 2, 2019 10:00 -11:00AM, followed by a Celebration of Life at 11:00AM at the Acton Funeral Home, 470 Massachusetts Avenue, with a luncheon following at the Acton Women's Club, 504 Main St., Acton. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, High Point Hospice House, 360 North Ave., Haverhill MA 01830, and Brigham and Women's Hospital.