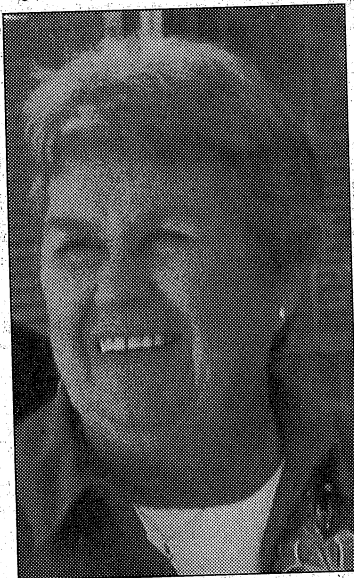


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Patricia Connolly Cushing

Patricia Connolly Cushing loved the ocean. Maybe because blue was her favorite color. Or because the smell of saltwater brought back fond memories of growing up on Cape Cod. Maybe it was the way a ripple can start in the middle of the ocean where no one can see it, then become a giant wave with a powerful impact by the time it reaches the shore — not unlike Pat herself.



Pat started creating ripples early on, first as a registered nurse, then as director of Alcoholism Treatment Services in New Bedford, Mass., for six years. Decades after Pat left that job, a former patient, on celebrating 40 years of sobriety, credited Pat with saving his life. He likely was one of many others who would say the same thing, even if they didn't have a chance to tell Pat directly.

She began her lifelong volunteerism on the Cape too, having started with a friend several chapters of Birthright to support women facing unplanned pregnancy.

After moving to Grinnell, Iowa, in 1984, Pat began working for Mayflower Health Care Center as a geriatric RN/social worker and director of social services, a position she held for 20 years. It was more than a job — Pat adored working with the elderly, so much so that, in 1988, she started also working as a contractor, doing functional assessments and developing care plans for prospective and current clients of a long-term care insurance company.

The waves she made and the number of lives she touched continued to grow, through both her work and her volunteer efforts for the Alzheimer's Association. Her impact did not go unnoticed, as Pat was recognized as Volunteer of the Year in Iowa by then-Governor Terry Branstad.

As much as she loved the ocean, Pat couldn't stand the sand and the way it got into everything. In the same way, she had little patience for drama, paperwork, mean people and unclear communication. Her direct, no-nonsense demeanor left no doubt about her thoughts and opinions, but she also deeply listened to people in a way that made them feel heard. Both attributes made her an excellent advocate for her patients and an inspiring mentor to countless other caregivers.

For all the waves she made in her work, Pat's anchors were at home and with her family. She and her wife, Dee Fairchild, shared nearly 40 years together surrounded by beloved friends in Iowa, enjoying golf, cards, dinners, socializing with their church group, and more. They loved traveling together, especially to Vermont, Maine and Cape Cod and to visit their five children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild in various parts of the country.

Pat's decades of working with the elderly and her regular exposure to death and dying led her to believe that death is not an ending, but merely a transition to something else. Still, nothing could prepare her for the death of her oldest son, Bill Cushing (Penny), last April from pancreatic cancer. Within six months, Pat was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer throughout her body. With her signature resolve, she elected to forgo chemotherapy and enter hospice, fittingly at Mayflower Health Care Center, where she received so much of the same love and care she had dispensed over the years there.

Pat transitioned on the night of March 18, 2023, six days shy of her 84th birthday, surrounded by her loving family: wife Dee and children Kathy Cushing (Jill Gould), Milton, Vt.; Mary Lehmann (Nick), Senoia, Ga.; Rob Cushing, Marstons Mills, Mass.; and Joe Cushing (Amy), Olathe, Kan.

In addition to her wife and four of her children, Pat is survived by her sisters Mary Moran (Manheim, Penn.), Barbara Connolly (Hyannis, Mass.) and Sheila Butler (Centerville, Mass.). Besides her son Bill, she was preceded in death by her parents, John and Kathleen Connolly.

Pat's wife and children invite all to join them on Wednesday, April 5, for visitation hours from 4 to 7 pm at Smith Funeral Home, 1103 Broad St., Grinnell, and/or for Pat's funeral service on Thursday, April 6, at 11 a.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1026 State St., Grinnell. Pat has been cremated, and interment will occur at a later date. In honor of the organizations that were near and dear to Pat's heart, donations can be made in Pat's memory to St. Paul's Episcopal Church or Mayflower Health Care Center.

The night before Pat died, on St. Patrick's Day, Grinnell's Too Many String Band stopped by to serenade Pat with "An Irish Blessing" — the perfect tribute to this first-generation full-blooded Irish American. So "until we meet again," Pat, "may God hold you in the palm of his hand."

Pat Cushing

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