



## Leona Uhlman

February 11, 1954 - March 27, 2022

Leona Uhlman, 68, died on March 26, 2022. She fought a brief, difficult battle with pancreatic cancer but passed away peacefully at her home in Celebration Florida with her family in attendance. She was born Leona Visokas in Paterson, NJ, to immigrant parents and spoke English, French and fluent German. Her father died when she was very young and she quickly developed an independent spirit and a fearless ambition that would guide her the rest of her dynamic life. She graduated Paterson Catholic high school in 1971 and married her first husband, Joe Sanginari, in 1977. She raised two children, Dean and Cinamin.

She completed Chubb Technical Training Institute in 1985 which led her into a career in the world of computers. As a highly technical assembly language programmer, she worked first for Beneficial Finance and then “the best job in the world” at Pan American World Airways, her springboard to the world. Disney Land opens a new attraction? Hop a plane to California. Berlin Wall comes down? Off to chip out a few pieces yourself. Son wants to learn to ski? Over to Switzerland! The huge stack of boarding passes from all over the globe was one of her prized possessions. When PanAm closed its doors, she returned to the world of finance where she worked for Household Finance and then HSBC. A brief second marriage to Joseph Zito ended in 1988 and Leona advanced from technical programming to IT management, where she led a variety of advanced IT development projects in the United States, United

Kingdom, and Hong Kong. In 2007 she was a Tribute to Women in Industry (TWIN) honoree.

She had a keen eye and intuitive instinct for real estate. While still managing international computer projects on three continents, she started a highly successful vacation home rental business and in 2008 built her own ocean front dream home in North Carolina. In 2011 she retired from HSBC and finally married her long time companion and soul mate, Walter Uhlman, and welcomed his daughter Jessica as her own. Walking on the beach at sunset, holding hands with her husband while her dogs trotted along side was the very best way to end the day. For the next ten years Leona focused her business acumen on her vacation rental business until finally retiring that in 2021. She spent several years as an NJ-FL snowbird before moving to Florida full time in 2020.

An avid reader and researcher of all things related to home, she had a passion for interior decorating and home design. She loved people, flowers, and especially dogs. She was a foster home for Weimaraner Dog Rescue for several years and adopted 3 as her own. Through her caring heart and generous nature, Leona had an amazing ability to create an instant connection with people that often led to lifelong friendships. She loved to be on the water, whether it was piloting her pontoon boat around Lake Hopatcong in NJ or taking a cruise ship through the Caribbean. She also loved entertaining and was a master of hospitality. Overnight guests always found a folded fluffy white robe with the belt tied in a bow, white terrycloth slippers and a stack of freshly laundered towels waiting on the bed and a bowl of potpourri on the nightstand. The frequent gatherings of family, friends, high school chums and past colleagues were always laughter filled joyful occasions that became lasting cherished memories.

But it was her six grandchildren who were the absolute light in her life. From

her son, Dean Sanginari and wife Ann came two grandsons, Charlie and Tommy. Her daughter, Cinamin Tufaro and husband Jason brought Annie and her step daughter Jessica Bentzel with husband Wesley added Maya, Silas and Conrad to the happy group. Known affectionately as Omi, the German word for “Granny”, it was a title she wore proudly. Whether coloring, reading books, playing hide and seek, splashing in the pool or baking banana bread, if it was an activity with grandchildren, Omi was at her happiest while doing it.

Some of the words Leona's many friends use to describe her are: vibrant, joy-filled, irreplaceable, strong and “sunshine walking into a room.” When confronted with a problem, they ask themselves, “What would Leona do?” She was a blessing to all who knew her. To her grandchildren she was simply, “the best Omi ever.” She will be very deeply missed.

Thank you to all who knew and shared her life. The family requests that in lieu of flowers or gifts, donations be made to the Lustgarten Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research.

( <https://lustgarten.org/> )

Per her request, there will not be a viewing. Instead she will be cremated and, in a private ceremony, her ashes will be scattered on the water so she can still travel the world and her spirit can continue to soar. A celebration of her life will be arranged for family and friends. Please contact a family member for details.

# Tribute Wall

RF

“ *Walter. I remember Leona from the first day I interviewed her to work at Pan Am and have nice memories of meeting you both at different airports while traveling around our wonderful System. A wonderful and well liked airline system's programmer. Best regards,  
Ralph Falconi*

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**Ralph Falconi** - April 03, 2022 at 08:34 PM

HB

“ *Cinamin was my roommate and college and quickly became more than just a roommate, but also a best friend. We always all looked forward to visits from Leona! She would spoil us and truly was a ray of sunshine. I had the chance to visit her beautiful home in New Jersey and then to spend some time at her vacation homes over the years. Though I hadn't seen Leona in several years, she always had held a very special place in my heart. She was truly of a kind. My heart goes out to Cinamin, Walter and the entire family. Sending all my love to you all and holding on tight to the memories of sweet Leona. ❤️*

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**Heidi Black** - April 01, 2022 at 04:26 PM

PG

“ A followup to my earlier post. I looked back over my texts with Omi, and wanted to share a couple of her responses that provide an insight into her (and memories with smiles).

June 2017: Oh my goodness! Thank you for your lovely note! Wishing you and your family all the best. Happy Father's Day! Omi.



August 2017: Hi Papa John! I hadn't heard about Irma, but I'm tuning into the weather channel right now. Ugh... I'll keep you posted. So sweet about your grandchildren. We just had our family reunion at Moondance week before last. Hoping to make great memories for our grandchildren too. 😊. Take care, Omi

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PapaJohn Grillot - April 01, 2022 at 12:03 PM

PG

“ Leona was our hostess at their vacation home (Moondance on Topsail) for our multi-generational family vacation in 2016. My family will again visit Moondance this summer, all with wonderful memories and anticipation. We talked a number of times over the years just to stay in touch ... she was that kind of a special person. I got to know Leona as "Omi" and she knew me as "PapaJohn". I always checked with her about Moondance after storms and hurricanes in the area, and we updated each other on our grandchildren. One favorite story: As we were preparing for our 2016 stay at Moondance, I asked if they had a set of Cornhole (Bags), which is a great fun game for our family. Since they did not have a set, they went out and bought a set just for us ... and for their personal use later on. I had left her a voice mail several weeks ago, but we were not able to talk then. So sad that she died so young.

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PapaJohn Grillot - April 01, 2022 at 11:52 AM

JF

“ Jim and Rosemarie Farrow purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Leona Uhlman.



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**Jim and Rosemarie Farrow** - April 01, 2022 at 09:17 AM

KL

“ I met Leona when I was 14 years old. She got my name from a neighbor because she was looking for a babysitter for her 2 children. She will never know the impact she had on my life. She was a strong, brilliant, independent woman. In the early 80s this was not as common as it is today. I admired her so much. She **ADORED** her children. Her face lit up when it came to them. She was patient, loving and kind. She made parenthood look easy. Years later after having my own children I teased her about making it look so easy because it wasn't. After the children grew up and my services were no longer needed we remained friends.. As life would have it we grew apart but she and her children were always in my heart. I will never forget her. My heart is breaking for Dean, and Cinamin and her husband, Walter. RIP Leona...💔💔💔

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**Kathy Lippmann** - April 01, 2022 at 07:55 AM

JM

“ My high school friend Leona Uhlman passed away yesterday. I met her In Freshman year, 1967. We were from 2 different worlds. I lived in an adorable house in North Haledon, she lived in a 5 floor walk up apartment off 11th street in Paterson. I was so firmly entrenched in my suburban environment, that I didn't even know anyone who lived in an apartment. She came for a sleepover, upon seeing my spacious rec room, she insisted we put records on the stereo and dance. She was dancing with my sister Joyce Estey when I took this picture. (With my new Instamatic Polaroid camera, no less!) She was so different than anyone I had ever met. She spoke fluent German, knew ALL the best places to shop in Paterson, and lectured me about using a boars hairbrush and good shampoo on my hair. She made Freshman and Sophomore year so much less traumatic than it would have been. We took creative writing with Sister Joan and I couldn't wait to read my essays aloud in the hopes that she would laugh. She often confided in me about her life before we met, whereas I hadn't been anywhere or done anything. Because of her I joined the American Institute for Foreign Study and went to school in Vichy in 1970. We had a row in Junior year, I was still under my mothers lock and key, she was brave, fearless and couldn't wait to run headlong into life. I watched in envy as she tore out of the parking lot in her yellow Volkswagen Beetle, or in the front seat of Tony Otilio's Corvette. After graduation we went our separate ways. We both left New Jersey behind. I kept in touch with Ronald Piccione, our mutual friend and my boyfriend from Paterson Catholic, who would meet me in LA on occasion. She was always part of our conversation, until finally, we met again at our 30th reunion in NJ. She was living in Lake Hopatcong, we agreed to meet the next day and somehow I managed to find her house (a miracle for me; pre-GPS). It was as if no time had elapsed. We finished each other's sentences and filled in the last 30 years. In the last 20 years we got together frequently. We had such good times with Patricia Cuccinello Haliskoe, Donna Kelley Schink, Donna Flory-Sooley, Rose Lynn Limone-Shawah, Fran Di Gangi, Debra Carnevale Basinski, and a whole group from PC. She looked fabulous and full of life at our 50th reunion last summer. This time I

*watched in envy as she danced a conga line in 5 inch heels and made it look effortless. Eight months later she battled pancreatic cancer, and cancer won. Damn it. I hope she knows how much I loved her. I hope she knows how grateful I was that she plucked me from the anonymous sea of girls to be her friend. I know she rests in peace, watching over her family as they mourn her absence from their lives. Goodbye my friend. Now that you're up there, don't forget to get Davy Jones's autograph for me. Til we meet again.*

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**Jo McLachlan** - March 31, 2022 at 10:12 PM

JM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



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**Jo McLachlan** - March 31, 2022 at 10:11 PM

EM

“ *I never met Leona, but my immediate and extended family stayed at Mondance in 2017. I had emailed Leona prior to our trip soon after purchasing a Tesla. Back in 2016 when I made the purchase, Tesla was still not commonplace I asked Leona if she was familiar and interested in the Tesla charging program. She was not, but she instantly saw the opportunity to add something to her gorgeous beach house that would attract a growing clientele of electric car owners. Our family has since considered Moondance to be one of the most magical places that we have ever been. Leona, you have clearly touched people in a rare way, and one that will never be forgotten. Rest In Peace, and be proud of the amazing life you have led.*

*-Eric Mongeau*

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**Eric Mongeau** - March 31, 2022 at 10:07 PM

CZ

“ To all the family of my friend Leona, my heart is crushed over this very sad news. My thoughts, prayers & love are with you all. Leona & I lived a block from each other, when we were very young. Our moms were both from the city of Hanau, Germany. Many good times were had with both of our families. Pleasureland on weekends, we had grilled burgers, hot dogs, etc. Lots of pool time, playing on the swings, listening to the music at the bandstand, singing, dancing, laughing & crying. Shopping at Two Guys for school clothes, hitting the sales with the moms. Lost touch for awhile as we became adults, but reconnected at Moondance, the beautiful beach home they built in NC. One day she popped into my head while housecleaning & decided to go online to look for her.....et voila! There she was her face on the screen, I knew immediately “I found her”! I wrote a mysterious letter to her, giving her clues as to who it was. She called when she got the letter. She said she was so excited she started hopping around in the kitchen, because she had looked in vain for me & my family. We talked for a while & started making plans to get together. She invited us (mom & my 2 sisters & me). Started immediately googling driving distance & discussing with family when would be good time to go. It was a long drive from Texas, but oh so worth it. We had pool time, beach time, game time, lotsa eating & boatloads of catching up! Best vacation ever! She was outside waiting as we pulled into drive, she was hopping around like a bunny, she was so excited. She ran to the car & started grabbing everyone as we got out. I was all the way in back of van & didn't have a chance to get out, we fell into each other's arms crying & hugging. The memories are so vivid! My family sends their condolences, as do I. I will miss my dear friend, my oldest friend in the world. She hated the phrase “old friends “, she called us longtime friends. But to me, she'll always be my old friend! I love & miss you, Leona!💔💔

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Christina Colbert aka Christa Zickus - March 31, 2022 at 06:28 PM

HL

“ Even thinking of Leona gone is hard to bear. I am so glad that the joy she gave she also received in this life. From all of the Lazettes to Walter and the family, our heartfelt condolences and God Bless.

Heather Lazette - March 31, 2022 at 04:22 PM



“ Heart's Companion Bouquet was purchased for the family of Leona Uhlman.



March 31, 2022 at 01:00 PM

DM

“ We met Leona through friends when we lived in Celebration. She was full of energy and always smiling. We are so deeply sorry for Walter and all of her family. Tony and Debbie Morrison

Debbie Morrison - March 31, 2022 at 08:21 AM

DB

“ We met Leona through our nephew Jason who is married to her daughter Cinamin. We spent quite a few holidays together at Jason and Cinamin’s home. Of course the apple of her eye was her little granddaughter, Annie! A fond memory of Leona was when she got down on the floor and climbed in a pop up castle with Annie where they played like two princesses! I will always remember Leona’s beautiful smile and the twinkle in her eyes! She was a vibrant person whose life was cut short by a terrible illness. At least she is at peace now and will always be watching over her loved ones. Her granddaughter, Annie, has that same beautiful smile and twinkle in her eyes so every time I look at Annie I will remember Leona. In fact, I texted Leona in December and said each time i look at Annie I see you and Leona replied with “Aww and a ❤️“. She will be deeply missed! Love, Denise, Michael and Kathryn Brust

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**Denise Brust** - March 30, 2022 at 01:46 PM