

Shared by Eric's daughter, Leslie Dressler

Eric Norman Rattan, artist, adventurer, advocate, gentle soul, loving father, caring & inclusive friend and charismatic man of many talents, died in his home surrounded by family on September 5, 2017 at the age of 66.

Eric was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer on June 5, and spent his last three months home in Madison with his family. He spent those days reading stories to his grandchildren, cooking his famous "grampy beans," receiving friends and family, going to the terrace, reading the NYT with a fresh pour over, and contemplating the end of life with dignity and grace. Before the disease progressed too far, he died quickly and mercifully of a heart attack. As it was his wish for a green burial, his family interred him in the hills of Vernon County in Western Wisconsin where he lies peacefully among the ferns and trees. Those who knew Eric would appreciate the final adventure involved in choosing to be buried on the slope of a steep hillside.

Eric was born in Detroit, MI on August 22, 1951. He grew up in Kenosha, WI where he had fond memories of playing backyard pick up hockey, joyriding in the family car, having raucous adventures with siblings, and discovering his passion for art, a part of which was inspired by his childhood home. He attended high school at Tilton School in New Hampshire where he is remembered affectionately by teachers and friends. He excelled at tennis and soccer and he fearlessly tested his capacity for flight on the ski jumping team. He loved Spanish class and studied in Costa Rica where he lived with the Ugalde family and inspired an exchange that continues to this day. Unbeknownst to anyone else at the time, he also spent his teenage years hitchhiking through Central America because it was so much more exciting than riding the bus.

Eric chose to attend the University of Arizona in order to pursue his passion - riding his motorcycle in the sun. From there, he formalized his study of Spanish at the University of Costa Rica, while in actuality he was learning more about language and culture out in the mountains with friends from the UCR hiking club. Ultimately he graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a major in education. His career as an educator would be short-lived as he had little tolerance for the bureaucratic and administrative requirements involved in this vocation, but he would be a lifelong teacher and student. Ever the innovating entrepreneur, he spent time on several occasions as a taxi and/or ambulance driver, later as a builder/contractor and finally as a full-time architectural artist.

Always a free spirit and unafraid to follow a gypsy lifestyle, the chapter following college involved setting up a taxi service in Aspen to fund the ski bum lifestyle. He then moved to Boston where he exchanged a paint job on a house for an apprenticeship with an Old World Italian stonemason and mosaicist. Here he also met his wife, Lindsay Adell. Eric and Lindsay eventually moved to Madison, WI. Eric and some friends founded the Madison Tenant Union, an advocacy group for tenants' rights and tenant organizing. He wrote the manual still in use by this organization today. Eric and Lindsay moved on to Chicago where Eric drove ambulance and remodeled their home, and they had two daughters, Leslie and Lisa. Wanting a quieter and more bohemian life, they moved to northern New Mexico;

Eric learned the art of Pueblo Revival style, ran an architectural art business, and built the family home at 8500 ft in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains outside of Taos, NM. Time in Velarde, Dixon, the mesa and canyon was spent with ceramist, softball, and poker-playing friends. The sunny southwest and his fair skin were not entirely compatible. Evicted by his dermatologist, they resettled in Madison, WI.

Following his passion for architectural art, Eric continued the company he founded in NM, Santa Fe Design Studio. Much of the time the market for his work was outside the Midwest, so he traveled extensively to execute his mosaic installations. He gained international fame and recognition, winning the Tile Heritage Foundation Award, Prism International Award, and the Spectrum International Award so many times that they rewrote the rules governing the competition. He was eternally grateful for the loyalty and hard work of his apprentices, who both inspired him with their talents and helped him with the mundane but necessary tasks like finding keys and checking email.

He developed and ran mosaic workshops around the country and abroad to teach technical skills to aspiring mosaic artists. Later in his career he became interested in public and community art. He designed and built the sign for Crestwood, his neighborhood in Madison. He returned to Tilton School for an artist-in-residency and with the participation of the kids, they created a tile mural for the school. Creating public art was definitely a chapter left incomplete.

After many years in Madison highlighted by raising family, great times with friends playing softball, running with "The Hash", cooking Swissconsin pizzas, criss-crossing the country with the rowing shell trailer for his daughters' team and building an art career, Eric moved to Detroit, MI to participate in the renaissance of a city he believed is destined to return to greatness. He enjoyed the excitement and energy of the city, and in particular the ability of artists to express their vision with freedom. He met a vibrant, artistic, activist community there. He fit right in. He spoke highly of his time mentoring kids, introducing them to the arts and creating with them...another chapter unfortunately cut short before completion.

He leaves behind wife Lindsay Rattan; daughter Leslie Dressler and son-in-law Kris Dressler; daughter Lisa Rattan; grandchildren Walter and Celia Dressler; mother Joanne Rattan; siblings Neil Rattan, Mark and Sara Rattan & Martha and Mark Tubinis; nieces and nephews Gina Rattan Gottlieb and Andrew Gottlieb & Aria Rattan; Seth & Quinn Rattan; and Luke, Andrew & Paige Tubinis; as well as many cousins, su familia tica and other dear friends. He is preceded in death by father Walter Rattan.

His family is grateful for the compassionate and exceptional care from Agrace Hospice and Dr. Noelle Loconte and her team at the UW Carbone Cancer Center.

In the words of un gran amigo, <Un cuerpo se enterraba, pero los recuerdos no. Que descansa en paz, Eric.> "A body is interred, but the memories not. Rest in peace, Eric."

We love you very much.

A Celebration of Life is to be held at a future date.

