

In Loving Memory Of

Denise Renee Ross

Born

April 20, 1970
Watertown, South Dakota

Died

July 20, 2018
Rapid City, South Dakota

Celebration of Life

Wednesday, July 25, 2018, at 7:00 p.m.
Kinkade Funeral Chapel

Memorial Service

Thursday, July 26, 2018, at 2:00 p.m.
Grace Lutheran Church
Sturgis, South Dakota

Officiant

Pastor Kris Garlick

Musical Selections

"Something You Get Through"
"A Way To Survive"
"It Is Well With My Soul"
"Wind Beneath My Wings"

Honorary Pallbearers

Steve Ross ~ Brian Ross
Johnny Ross ~ Daniel Ross

Inurnment

At A Later Date

In Loving Memory Of



Denise Renee Ross

1970 ~ 2018

*You can shed tears that she is gone
Or you can smile because she has lived.
You can close your eyes and pray that she will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that she has left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see her
Or you can be full of the love that you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember her and only that she is gone
Or you can cherish her memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what she would want:
smile, open your eyes, love, and go on.*

David Harkins

Denise was born April 20, 1970, in Watertown and was brought home on June 15, 1970, by Jerry and Linda Ross, who legally adopted her on February 22, 1971.

Jerry's work for Norwest Bank led the family to move around the state. Denise grew up in Mobridge, Aberdeen, Gregory, and Chamberlain, and the family frequently visited Sturgis, where Jerry and Linda were raised.

She participated in gifted programs during her school years and was co-valedictorian of the Chamberlain High School class of 1988. She earned a bachelor's degree in journalism from South Dakota State University in 1992. During her college years, she worked part-time at the Brookings Register, and interned at the Chamberlain Register and Rapid City Journal. She worked at SDSU's student newspaper, the Collegian, and served a stint as editor.

After college, she worked at a newspaper in Kearney, NE, before spending a year in the National Civilian Community Corps, an AmeriCorps community service program for young adults that was created in 1992. After completing her NCCC service in Denver, she worked in Lander, WY, for the Wyoming State Journal and Wind River News.

In 1996, she joined the staff of the Rapid City Journal as a bureau reporter in the northern Black Hills. She lived in Sturgis and Deadwood before eventually moving to Rapid City.

On Sept. 4, 1999, she married David Stuart Larson at Sylvan Lake.

Also in 1999, she found her professional calling in a transition to government and political reporting for the Journal. She earned a reputation as one of the state's best journalists while covering events including the 2002 U.S. Senate race in which Tim Johnson narrowly defeated John Thune, the 2004 manslaughter trial of former governor Bill Janklow, the 2004 U.S. Senate race in which Thune narrowly toppled Tom Daschle, and the 2006 statewide abortion-ban election. She also covered the annual South Dakota legislative sessions in Pierre.

In 2006, she left the Journal to pursue her own journalistic endeavors. Building on her experience as one of the writers of the Journal's popular Mount Blogmore political blog, she started her own political website, which she dubbed the Hoghouse Blog, after a South Dakota legislative term for a maneuver in which one bill's text is wholly replaced with that of another.

The blog showcased Denise at her best as she broke news and shared insights in a conversational writing style that was laced with humor. It was during her years operating the blog that she became a recurring "political junkie" for South Dakota Public Broadcasting's midday radio program, then known as "Dakota Midday" and now called "In the Moment." She continued to make guest appearances on the show until the weeks before her death.

She operated her blog through 2009 while also working on a documentary, "Unplanned Democracy: America's First Vote on Abortion," about South Dakota voters' 2006 rejection of an abortion ban passed by the Legislature. The documentary was released in 2008.

Also in 2008, she was honored by the Journalism and Mass Communication Department at her alma mater, SDSU, as the department's Lusk Fellow in Journalism.

She gave birth to David Alexander Larson on Feb. 5, 2009, and Jerryd Ross Larson on April 18, 2010. She considered her sons to be her greatest achievements, and she worked to expose them to a wide variety of experiences and to foster their intellectual curiosity. She spent many hours reading classics of children's literature with them.

She went to work in 2010 as a communications specialist for Golden West Telecommunications. In 2011, she became a web editor/reporter for The Daily Republic of Mitchell, a job that allowed her to work remotely from her home in Rapid City while spending time with her boys.

In 2011, at age 41, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She insisted on working through her cancer treatments and brought a laptop to her chemotherapy sessions.

From 2013 to 2016, she worked as editor of South Dakota Dashboard, a project of the Black Hills Knowledge Network in Rapid City. In recent years, she and her husband, David, who is an operating room nurse at Rapid City Regional Hospital, operated an Airbnb rental out of the basement of their home in the Chapel Valley area of western Rapid City.

While juggling family and work demands, she spent many hours battling her recurrent cancer. She thoroughly researched the disease and her treatment options, participated in two clinical trials, traveled out-of-state for consultations and specialized treatments, overhauled her diet (partially with food from her own large garden), and did everything in her power to prolong her life. Through it all, she was rarely heard to complain, and she remained optimistic to the end.

She leaves behind her family; a wide network of colleagues, sources and friends; thousands of news stories, plus columns, blog posts and a documentary; and an example of uncommon courage and determination in the face of terminal cancer.

Denise Ross, 48, of Rapid City, died July 20, 2018, after a tenacious 6½ -year-long fight against cancer.

She is survived by her husband, David Larson; her children, David and Jerryd Larson; and her parents, Jerry and Linda Ross, all of Rapid City; two brothers, Brian E. Ross and his wife, Karen, of Dunkirk, Maryland, and Steven P. Ross and his wife, Sheena, of Summerset, SD; a grandfather, Vernon E. Ross, and a grandmother, Arlene Ennis, both of Sturgis; and numerous nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and in-laws.

She was preceded in death by her grandmothers, Theckla Hartl and Sharon Ross; grandfathers, Morten Mortesen and Edgar Ennis; uncle, Leonard Ross; and cousin, David Ross.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the Denise Ross Cancer Fund.

Condolences may be sent to the family at www.kinkadefunerals.com.



The family invites you to join them for fellowship and lunch in the Son Shine Room in the church basement following the memorial service.

We thank you for your presence and condolences.