

## BOBBY AND SUSIE BURKE

by *Billy Burke*

My mother, Bobby Burke, passed away on January 1, 2023, and Susie Burke, my wife, passed January 11, 2023.

Bobby Burke (Price, Donleavy, Stoneking) started folk dancing when I was 3 or 4 years old. I believe her first performance was a Lithuanian dance directed by Walter Groethe. I remember hoops with flowers on them. By the time I was 4, my mother started teaching some of us kids folk dances. I remember that the first dance we did was to Teddy Bear's Picnic.

When I was 12, she started a performing group called The Polkateers. She danced for years with Madelynne Greene's Workshop. I was able to join the group at the age of 15 when I met the stipulation of being taller than the shortest lady (thank you, Teddy Wolterbeek!). After that we danced with Grace Nicholes' Terpsichoreans.

We attended both Stockton Folk Dance Camp and the last two years of Santa Barbara Folk Dance Camp and the first year of the San Diego Folk Dance Camp. My mother was also instrumental in starting Madelynne Greene's Mendocino Folklore Camp.

My mother was my first teacher, my first best friend, and my first dance partner. Because of her, I have enjoyed almost 70 years studying, dancing and teaching folk dance.



Bobby Burke



The author with Susie Burke and their son.

My wife, Susie Burke (nee Stufflebeam), was born and raised in the Ojai Valley. I met her at the Ojai Valley Inn Riding Stables. Susie and I knew each other for a couple of years before we went on a date, to a cowboy-roping event on Easter Sunday. After dating for two years, her mother told her she ought to "move down with that poor boy," because I was driving up to Ojai every weekend. We lived together for four years and enjoyed almost 44 years of marriage.

Susie studied dance in Ventura at the Billy Clower dance studio. She joined the AMAN Folk Ensemble, eventually becoming one of the directors. She was also instrumental in the formation of the AVAZ dance group. Later she directed AMAN's singers. She sang for years with Nevenka. I believe the reason Mendocino Folklore Camp lasted for years beyond expectations was directly

because of Susie's leadership. While it is true that many others joined the cause – Chris Campbell, Russell Linscott, Tom Adams, Beverly Mann and others – Susie was the glue that held it all together. Susie also was instrumental in the creation of The California Multicultural Arts Institute and the AMAN Society support group.

Professionally, Susie was an Animation Checker. She worked for most of the major studios, including Disney, Warner Brothers, Filmation, and Hanna-Barbera. She checked movies like Disney's *Oliver*, *Little Mermaid*, *Space Jam*, *Quest for Camelot*, *The Simpson Movie*, and a score of other productions.

Susie was my best friend, the mother of my wonderful son, and truly my smarter half. She would occasionally lose patience with me, but she never lost faith.

**There will be a Celebration of Life held at the Ojai Arts Center on April 29, 2023.** The web site for the full details and to make a reservation is [CelebratingSusie.com](http://CelebratingSusie.com).