

Patrice E. Bickford died on September 24, 2018, surrounded by her family. She was 61 years old.

Pat was born to Marjorie and Bill Bilzi on January 31, 1957 in Huntington, NY, where the Bilzis had lived since her grandparents immigrated from Parma, Italy. Bill was an engineer at Grumman Aerospace, where he worked on the lunar lander; he was commissioner of his volunteer fire department and the local little league. In addition to raising Pat and her older brothers—Michael, who died in infancy, Steve, and Tom—Marjorie worked for the town, a middle school, and a local art museum.

Pat loved her childhood on Long Island. She danced for many years and took horseback riding lessons; she sailed on the sound in the summer and skated on the lake in the cold. In high school, she drove around town in a temperamental Austin America that her father gradually rebuilt with parts he designed. When her parents went away each spring, Pat would invite her friends to the house—and their friends, too. In later years, knowing some tricks, she was all but impossible to fool.

After graduating from the University of Arizona with a degree in journalism, Pat moved home to New York and began a twenty-year career in advertising, mostly for financial institutions. Over that time, she worked for Doyle Dane and Bernbach, EF Hutton, Chemical Bank, Carteret Savings Bank of New Jersey, and Prudential Financial. She cherished the memories of her apartment on the Upper West Side: she could walk to Lincoln Center, and her brother Tom would stay over on the nights he went to business school.

At EF Hutton she met Michael Bickford, who made an excellent second impression. They were married in the spring of 1986 and moved to Basking Ridge in 1987. Michael brought his young son James to their marriage, who Pat loved as her own. Their daughter Kerry was born in 1990. The family home was full of furniture built by Pat's father, rustic antiques that Mike and Pat collected on their semi-annual trips to Maine, and the warmth of Pat's kitchen. She cooked and baked with great skill, greater love, and in very great quantities for her family and friends.

As Kerry grew up, Pat spent more time working at home and in the community. She led Kerry's Girl Scout troop from Brownies through Seniors; she was very proud that most of the girls received silver awards, and several received gold. Pat continued to work with the local Girl Scout council for almost a decade after Kerry left for college. She was also active in her church, St. Bernard's Episcopal, where she sat on the vestry, sang in the choir, and served in the altar guild. In recent years, she worked with the backpack program of the Food Bank Network of Somerset County, preparing bags of food for children to take home over the weekend.

In the last year, as she was battling cancer, Pat visited friends and family in New York, Maine, Utah, California, and Washington DC. In early September, she took a long-planned trip to Italy with Mike, James, and Kerry, where she walked on the ancient walls of Lucca, shopped for leather in Florence, and saw the Sistine Chapel in Rome. Pat continued from Italy to England, where she visited her cousin. She declined suddenly on her return home, and was at peace as she passed.

A wake will be held at Gallaway & Crane, 101 South Finley Avenue in Basking Ridge, on Friday, September 28, from 2 to 4 pm and 7 to 9 pm. There will be a funeral service at St. Bernard's Episcopal Church, 88 Claremont Road in Bernardsville, at 10 am on Saturday, September 29. The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, donations be made to support the backpack program that meant so much to Pat. Checks can be written to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County, P.O. Box 149, Bound Brook, NJ 08805. Please write "Backpack Program" on the memo line.