

Elinor S. Cullen
Obituary



Elinor S. Cullen
Obituary

After courageously fighting cancer for more than a year, Elinor S. Cullen passed away peacefully on August 8, 2025, at home in her own bed, surrounded by family and loving caregivers. She was born Elinor Anne Steinfeld on March 20, 1941, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Harry Levy Steinfeld and Josephine Wolfner Steinfeld. Elinor grew up in Glencoe, Illinois, just north of Chicago, before heading to Manhattan to attend Barnard College, graduating with the class of 1962.

After graduation, she stayed in Manhattan, working for a news service in the United Nations Building and becoming a familiar face at the UN delegates' lounge. Later, she joined the Virginia Kirkus Library Service in Greenwich Village, reviewing books for libraries. Elinor was especially proud of her children's book reviews, including her review of *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, and she cherished the personally autographed copy the author gifted her.

Shortly after graduation, Elinor met Dermott E. Cullen, a student at Columbia University, located across the street from Barnard. They married on September 19, 1965, and welcomed their son, Roy Edward Cullen, on January 7, 1967. The family soon moved to Eastern Long Island, where Dermott worked as a nuclear physicist at Brookhaven National Laboratory. In 1972, they settled in Livermore, California, and in 1979, they embarked on an eight-year adventure living in Vienna, Austria, where Dermott worked at the International Atomic Energy Agency. In 1987, they returned to Livermore, where they built a vibrant life together.

Those years abroad gave Elinor and Dermott the chance to see the world. They traveled extensively through Europe—England, Germany, Finland, Italy, Hungary, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Yugoslavia, Russia, Turkey, Greece—and beyond, visiting China, Thailand, Egypt, India, Brazil, and Libya. In later years, their adventures continued with trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, Japan, and many joyful vacations in Hawaii. Wherever she went, Elinor made friends with her warmth and curiosity.

Elinor earned her master's degree from California State University and devoted much of her life to teaching and community work. She taught English as a second language both in Vienna and at Ohlone College in California, and she worked at ECHO Housing in Livermore, helping people find affordable housing.

Her love of culture and art shone through in all she did. She was a docent at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, served on the board of Del Valle Fine Arts, and found joy and beauty in the art of Ikebana, Japanese flower arranging. Elinor not only studied Ikebana, but she also took great pride in creating elegant and thoughtful arrangements, bringing a sense of peace and artistry into every space she touched.

For over 30 years, Elinor also dedicated herself to training and competing with her beloved dogs—Aiko, Aslan, and Zorro. Together, she and Zorro earned the prestigious Star Award for both annual and lifetime achievements as the top Portuguese Water Dog team in Northern California.

When asked recently to complete the sentence, "Love is...", Dermott answered, "Love is forever." Elinor's love and spirit will forever live on in the hearts and memories of all who were fortunate enough to know her.