

IN LOVING MEMORY

Ann S. Langley

MARCH 1947 ~ MAY 2026

Ann was born to Dr. and Mrs. J.W. Schonwald and spent her childhood among the redwoods of California's north coast. Two events in her teenage years would change Ann's life forever.

The first was the diagnosis of a seizure-causing neurological disease.

The diagnosis would not come to define Ann, but the way she dealt with it would.

She was told by people around her a long list of things she could not do because of her diagnosis. She was also told that because of her illness and her gender she could not expect equal treatment. She rejected these ideas outright.

That persistence and stubbornness, born before she even had lived outside her parents' home, shaped her responses to challenges for the rest of her life.

The second event, when she was 15, changed not just her life but the lives of thousands in Tracy in the years to come — she met Terrance Langley. Terry and Ann fell in love and married in 1969. She thrived with his staunch defense of her capabilities, drive and ambition for herself and her community. He never told her about her limitations, only her opportunities. She was told she would not be able to have a normal career outside of office support staff because of her disorder, so they opened a business together and became highly successful.

There was one limitation others gave her that she was proudest to have overcome. She gave birth to two healthy boys after doctors told her she should never try to have children because the strain of childbirth could activate seizures. Michael and Aaron Langley were raised in Tracy, taught by their mother not to accept limitations placed on them by others. She taught them to pursue their ambitions and not to accept challenges as reasons to quit.

As her children aged, Ann became committed to growing the Tracy community in unexpected ways. During her tenure as president of Tracy Art League Ann expanded the local Expressions! art show to a most successful regional art exhibition. In addition, she initiated the Children's Art Tour to the Tracy school district which introduced thousands of Tracy students to the joy and study of fine art.

Her signature achievement was still ahead of her. In 1991, as an artist and charter member of the city's Tracy Tomorrow advisory committee, she conceived of a cultural hub for citizens to enjoy. This was the idea that would become the Grand Theatre Center

for the Arts. The Grand was a former vaudeville theater, built in 1923, that was in great disrepair, falling apart on the inside and outside. Part of the complex was also a low-rent apartment building, and the art deco style was broken or hidden behind hastily erected walls. In her imagination, it connected Tracy's history through a cultural center that could be central to Tracy's future.

She would lead the Arts Leadership Alliance, later the Grand Foundation, to raise almost \$2 million to fund the purchase and restoration of the three-building complex into one center for cultural arts in Tracy. It became what later mayors and political figures would call the Jewel of Downtown Tracy. To many, she became Mama Grand.

The Grand Theatre has fostered the learning and cultural growth of thousands of Tracy residents over the last 19 years. She again prized one number above all: the children. More than 90,000 children toured Expressions! since it began. Many thousands more took a class or enjoyed a show at the Grand Theatre. She knew that Tracy's thriving future lived with these children and their enrichment and appreciation for culture.

For her decades of work, the Tracy Chamber of Commerce named her the Female Citizen of the Year in 2001 and in 2023 the San Joaquin County Commission on the Status of Women honored her with the Susan B. Anthony Women's Achievement Award for Community Service.

Ann is survived by: Terry, her husband of 57 years; her sons Michael (Erica) and Aaron; a brother; sisters Barbara (Steve) and Elizabeth (Hans); sister-in-law and best friend Susan (Robin); brothers-in-law David (Tencia) and Thomas; and 13 nieces and nephews.

A service for Ann will be held at Fry Memorial Chapel on June 2 at 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please offer a donation to the Grand Foundation.

