

June 27, 1974

July 7, 2025

Melanie Sue de Jonge

Melanie Sue de Jonge, of Grants Pass, OR, was born on June 27, 1974, and passed away on July 7, 2025, in Medford, OR.

Melanie grew up in Tracy, CA. The small town didn't offer much in the way of entertainment, but luckily, her love of reading meant she lived a thousand lives escaping into the books she devoured, which kept her genius IQ occupied, much to the chagrin of her little sister, who was always bugging her to play. In elementary school, she was singled out by her teachers for her intelligence and placed in the G.A.T.E. program. In high school, she took AP honors classes before graduating from Tracy High School in 1992 with a 4.2 GPA. She then went on to graduate magna cum laude in 2002 from Pepperdine University, Seaver School of Liberal Arts, with a bachelor's degree in elementary education.

Armed with an unquenchable thirst for information and knowledge, combined with a passion for literacy and social justice, she charged full steam ahead into teaching, sure it would be the perfect fit as a career choice. It was her glass slipper, and all she had to do was find Cinderella. She started out at an elementary school in the Tracy area, teaching 2nd grade for two years, then 4th grade for one year before moving to Southern California and teaching at a Los Angeles charter middle school for another two years.

While she loved teaching and she adored her students, it turned out there was a lot more to teaching than just well . . . teaching. Her career did not have the fairytale ending she'd hoped for, and she decided to leave the classroom altogether.

Thankfully, during her college years, she dabbled in teaching herself all about SEO (search engine optimization), websites, and much, much more. You know. . . for fun. After she hung up her rulers and chalkboard, she focused on a different type of education.

This led to her second career helping businesses and individuals with their online presence. She decided to go full-time, earning her income online, and never looked back.

In the midst of all of that, Melanie also worked as a professional interpreter. Inspired by a friend in high school who was deaf, she learned ASL (American Sign Language) to communicate better with her, despite her friend being able to read lips. Melanie didn't just learn it; she became fluent and used that skill in church ministries, at college, and as an employee of Tracy Unified School District for one year before she moved to LA.

And the final notch on her career belt was NYT & USA Today bestselling author. In 2012, Melanie and her younger sister Shawna joined forces to become the writing duo Melanie Shawn and released their first book in November. By July 2014, they hit the bestseller lists. After eight years, Melanie took a step back from publishing in 2020 to pursue other interests. One of those was traveling, which she did across America with her Labrador companion, four-legged bestie, Pepper Princess, for four years before settling down in Oregon.

To know Melanie was to know someone who was incredibly generous in sharing her wisdom, insights, and extensive knowledge on a wide range of subjects. Her sharp wit and laugh-out-loud one-liners often caught people off guard and left them in stitches.

Born with an innate passion and fervor for social justice issues, she was an ally for the oppressed, a voice for the silenced, and an advocate for the marginalized.

The absolute loves of her life were the following (in no particular order): dogs, traveling, reading, audiobooks, podcasts, theater, movies, binge-watching TV, singing, music, and live music.

As much as she loved traveling, she called L.A. her home for most of her adult life. One of the reasons for that was the music scene/culture. There were so many venues for singer-songwriters to perform. She went to performances with friends and supported the artists she loved and believed in so much. She created a website, acousticvids.com, sharing clips of performances and interviews with artists to promote them. When she started meeting artists from across the country who had come to L.A. to perform, she was so surprised to find out they knew who she was and were big fans of her and acousticvids.com. The whole experience was one of the most special seasons in her life that she cherished.

Melanie is survived by her father and mother, John and Bonnie de Jonge; younger sister, Shawna Renae Wesley; nephew, Joseph Nathen Wesley Jr.; niece, Mariah Rachelle Wesley; foster brother, Dominic Charles Arnold; many aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Melanie will be deeply missed but forever in our hearts.

The Celebration of Life service will be September 13, 2025, at 11:00 a.m.,

Journey Christian Church, 4600 S. Tracy Blvd., Tracy, CA 95376.

Memorials or donations may be made to People for Pets, Tracy, CA. peopleforpets.com

