



## Philip McCord Benight

November 19, 2024

Philip McCord Benight died one year ago on this day, November 19, 2024, at his home in Lancaster, PA, after blessing this world for sixty-eight rich and rambling years with his infectious laughter, raucous storytelling, exquisite lemon merengue pies, and unparalleled friendship. He was an absolute character. We didn't deserve him.

Philip had exquisite taste: an unmatched eye for design; and a better ear for humor than most anyone. He was the best storyteller most have ever met. He was loyal to a fault, without suffering fools.

He is preceded in death by his beloved wife, Becky Golden, who he was absolutely devoted to throughout their twelve years of marriage—and the seven long years after her death. He is also predeceased by his parents, Horatio McCord Benight and Lela Belle Benight (Breiver), both of Little Rock, Arkansas, where Philip was born on the afternoon of July 26, 1956.

He is survived by his daughter, Heather Mahon; granddaughters, Tara Boudreaux, married to Jade Boudreaux, and Hailey Boudreaux, married to Cody Boudreaux; great-grandchildren: Kaden Gifford, Addie Reese, Carter Corolla, Cailey Boudreaux and Everly Boudreaux; and aunts Carolyn Sue, Brenda Zelda, Barbara McCrotty, Helen Weymouth, Joann Reynolds, and Sidney Scoles, all of Little Rock, Arkansas; other survivors include his sister,

Leathia Garrett Ingram, and her husband Jon; and Becky's son, John Golden.

Philip traveled around the U.S. extensively, leaving Little Rock in his late teens for Texas and California. He worked in various fields: a dress shop in D.C.; he was a trained cosmetologist. Philip ultimately settled in Washington D.C. where he met Becky, who grew up there.

They enjoyed being in motion together and began to drive school bus, Philip as the driver and Becky as an aid. She would pack lunch for the two of them, stowing a table, tablecloth, and lunch basket behind the last seat, to be assembled and eaten along any picturesque roadside they chose.

After their house outside DC burned to the ground, the couple moved to Conestoga, Lancaster County, PA, where, after several years of living together, they married on August 11, 2005. They were deeply protective and supportive of one another. Becky, who was a committed paper and crafts artist, encouraged Philip's projects: furniture- and bird house-building, tree-felling. When Becky's health began to wane, Philip remained her committed caregiver, taking off work to nurse her after each hospital stay.

When Becky decided, after more than a decade of debilitating, painful surgeries, chemotherapy, and strokes, that she could no longer continue living, Philip knew he couldn't live without her.

In January, 2017, Philip and Becky decided to end their lives together. The decisive event was the refusal of their insurance to provide a home health aide to stay with Becky while Philip drove school bus; authorities committed her to a skilled nursing facility against Philip and Becky's wishes. The couple consumed prescription medications in their car while parked in the driveway of their Conestoga home, overlooking the lights of Lancaster City.

Becky ultimately died, on January 30, 2017, at the age of 73, but Philip did not; when he awoke from a coma, Lancaster police arrested him for assisting his wife's suicide. He was charged with a second-degree felony.

In a statement to the court Philip said, "I loved Becky then. I love her now, I miss her every day. But she's where she wanted to be. She stayed here longer than she wanted to."

He was sentenced to six months house arrest and five years probation. Philip's attorney, Alan Goldberg, said at the time that Philip, "didn't expect to be here. He expected to punish himself more harshly than any court could."

Philip and Becky's story was broadly reported in local and national publications, including Lancaster Online and Harper's magazine. The latter feature was optioned for film and theater.

Philip was forced to retire from bus driving after Becky's death. No longer able to take care of their property in Conestoga, he moved to a house on Plum Street in Lancaster city.

Philip loved, with his whole heart, the bees, squirrels, and birds in his backyard, the collection of antiques and collectables he and Becky had together accumulated over the years, his assortment of family heirlooms, and the great staghorn fern that had once belonged to his father; Philip had nursed back to life after Horatio's death and had lovingly tended for another 27 years.

He was a superb cook, taking up both the Thai language and cuisine in the last five years of his life. He was an inveterate news junkie, choosing to live until after the 2024 election so that his vote against Trump would be counted.

And he was an unrivaled conversationalist, often spending hours on the phone with friends near and far discussing the world, their challenges, and his own wide-ranging interests.

Philip's friends and family mourn the one-year anniversary of his death. We know there will never be another like him and we miss him dearly.

In memoriam, donations may be made to Lancaster Pride at [www.lancasterpride/support/donate](http://www.lancasterpride/support/donate).