



# Donna Beatrice Ann Reynolds

September 22, 1945 - April 27, 2026

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Donna had many important relationships. We asked several people from different parts of her life to share their memories

From Donna's sister Tricia Reynolds:

Donna was born in Brooklyn but grew up in Croton-on-Hudson, NY. In the open air of the 1950's she thrived as a tomboy, idolized the black and white TV show Annie Oakley, frolicked with her dogs, cats and other animal life, and yearned for more frequent visits to the Dude Ranch. This prepared her as an animal activist for the last 30 years of her life.

The loss of her father at age 12 impacted the family of a steadfast widowed mother, Beatrice Mackinnon, and three daughters, Kathie, Donna, and Tricia, forming the basis of a strong feminist family. It was the girls who raked, shoveled, chopped wood, changed storm windows, cleaned gutters, and sanded/repainted the inside and outside of the 200+ year old house. There were no locks on the doors in those days, with people of all generations stopping in: friends often became family.

There was Reynolds family across town, with close cousins to look up to as guides. There were other family too, the well-known war correspondent Quentin Reynolds, his brother Jim who served in JFK's cabinet, and dear aunts Con and Marge. Much later, bonds were also tied with the MacKinnon family.

In her teenage years, Donna starred as a high school athlete and became a much- admired young woman. She was voted Best All Around and Most Athletic in her senior year.

Music was an important part of her life. Her mother was an accomplished pianist and her father a Dixieland jazz buff, and Donna dabbled in lots of instruments including piano, accordion, cello, guitar, banjo, harmonica...

She went on to graduate from Albany State University making life-long friendships and spent most of her adult life living in the Albany area. Her subsequent degree from the New England School of Acupuncture provided her with a profession in which she alleviated the pain of many clients.

From longtime friends Jean Corigliano and Jorinda Gershon:

In 1972, Reynolds (as we know her) moved with Jorinda and Corg to an old farmhouse near Middlebury, Vermont where she worked in a bookstore and as a barmaid, collecting new friends as easily as she always had. After a year the three of us went our separate ways—though never truly apart. Reynolds spent a year in Germany taking care of her old friend Barbara's daughter Jenny, before returning to the states and settling with Corg in a small house in Kinderhook, NY. That house became a gathering place, drawing a wide and wonderful circle of friends, including Jorinda's then boyfriend, Robert, and the crowd he brought with him. Reynolds charmed everyone with her genuine

kindness and a bright sense of humor. And, of course, her guitar! She was the only one of us with trained musical skill and without “performing”, she took us under her musical wings. Together, we ate, drank, and “sang every song we ever knew” . . .

For a couple of years, that little house held something rare—a chosen family at its happiest—before life called us each forward and we grew up, carrying her music with us.

From Sharon Stonekey, partner, then chosen sister:

In 1976, Donna came out as a lesbian feminist and was vocal from the very beginning. Because this was the era when lesbians and gay men could be criminally prosecuted for making love, were considered mentally ill by the medical profession, and were rejected by many families of origin, coming out required the courage and bravery of an Amazon. In the subsequent 50 years, compulsory heterosexual culture changed to include every legal right enjoyed by Americans. This feat is owed solely to activists like Donna.

Donna was more than an animal whisperer; she understood animals in ways rarely seen in humans. Her lifelong dedication included a vegan diet, animal activism, volunteering at animal sanctuaries, and her many personal relationships with diverse species.

I learned many things from Donna: gardening, music, chopping wood, animal understanding, fearlessness on behalf of one’s values. The 50-year affiliation we shared was as remarkable as a spring day and a lifetime of sterling dedication.

From Friend and Animal Activist Valerie Lang Waldin:

The world recently lost a beautiful soul in Donna Reynolds....

Donna Reynolds walked into my Animal Law classroom around 2007 at HVCC and we would never be the same. She had a quiet, gentle way about her; but if you challenged or questioned her on animal rights, especially with regard to elephants in circuses, her demeanor would shift from a peaceful soul to that of a knowledgeable, valiant warrior.

I knew, as a professor, I had much to learn from her. Year after year, after that first Animal Law class in which she spoke, Donna would serve as a guest speaker in my class, to expose the realities of animals (mainly elephants) in circuses. She would come equipped with an actual bull hook used by Ringling Bros., and other circuses, to beat these giant and docile creatures into submission. She impacted dozens if not hundreds of my students, to the point where some actually went to Albany to take a stand for the animals or to film the realities of life behind the Big Top.

Donna Reynolds had everything to do with bringing Ringling Brothers, and animal acts in circuses, down. She was instrumental in seeing to it that Alison Argo's brilliant documentary, "The Last Pig," and JoAnne McArthur's legendary "We Animals" presentation, came to HVCC which packed auditoriums. She quietly volunteered tirelessly and found peace at the Catskill Animal Sanctuary in Saugerties, NY. She brought Liz Marshall's "The Ghosts in Our Machine" to the Spectrum in Albany. She never quit being a voice for those ghosts.

She quietly but consistently moved mountains.

The world is a different place because of Donna Reynolds. She was one of my heroes and mentors. No words can describe what she meant to me and what

she did for animal rights and protection. Her legacy is real and lives on.

Until we meet again, my beautiful and compassionate friend, rest easy. Your work on this earth is done, but I believe you can never fully rest; and your work is just getting started. I love you Donna Reynolds.--VLW

Donna was predeceased by her father Donald, her sister Kathie, and her mother Beatrice, leaving her sister Tricia Reynolds and brother-in-law Antonio Di Giacomo (Naples Italy), her close cousin Judy Furey DeChiro (Loudonville), and karmic marrow, Sharon Stonekey (Woodstock), as well as so many close friends

Cremation was carried out through Buono Funeral Service, Inc. in Saugerties, NY. Condolences may be expressed at [www.buonofuneralservice.com](http://www.buonofuneralservice.com).

Donations would be so appreciated by Donna and the elephants: Amboseli Trust for Elephants, 10 State St., Newburyport, MA 01950, or online: "ATE-- Amboseli Trust for the Elephants" in Kenya.