Forrest Lann Copeland

The irrepressible Forrest Lann Copeland passed into spirit on February 24, 2023 after a sudden illness.

Born in Texas on October 30, 1947, Lann attended elementary school in Laporte, Texas and began piano lessons. Moving to Houston in 1959, he continued to study piano and organ, and attended junior and senior high school in the Memorial area. It was there that Lann's talent for the Spanish language first developed.

Moving with his family to Crockett, Texas just before graduation, Lann matriculated Crockett High School. His escapades with his cousin Sharon are still legendary in that town – one involving a stolen school bus is particularly memorable. Despite his shenanigans, his wild side went undetected, and he remained the popular church organist at the Presbyterian church in Crockett.

Lann attended Sam Houston State Teachers' College (now University of Texas Huntsville) where he was a dorm don. The job of dorm don was not without its dangers: Lann once coolly disarmed a party of drunken undergraduates who had brought a handgun into their room. Lann spent his summers with college friends at their homes in Mexico and Nicaragua to improve his Spanish, an experience that made a deep impression on him.

His family moved to Victoria, Canada before he graduated with a degree in Spanish in 1969, and he joined them there later that year, driving his baby-blue Volkswagen convertible all the way from Texas.

Finding his feet quickly in Victoria, Lann found work as an organist at the Oak Bay Marina, serenading diners with his vast repertoire of show tunes and popular music, all played by ear. He also played at the Barbary Banjo in Bastion Square for several years. When not at work, Lann could be found at

Reggie’s After Hours Club or the Crest Motor Inn. Lann was lucky with pull tabs, and was much sought after as a trivia team member.

Lann spent several years as a travelling concert artist for the Wurlitzer Organ company, travelling across Canada and giving concerts in every major city and town. True to his Southern roots and in denial about the Canadian climate, Lann thought a dress shirt and a windbreaker would suffice in any weather; he staunchly refused to buy an overcoat until he landed at the airport in Saskatoon one brisk February day and realized that his survival depended on upgrading his outerwear.

In the 1970s, he worked as a sales representative for Scott Piano and Organ on Fort Street in Victoria before starting his own business, Copeland Music Centre in Brentwood Bay. He was also instrumental in starting the Brentwood School of Music with friend Carrie Dujela. As a dealer for Eminent Organs, a company based in the Netherlands, Lann travelled to Holland from time to time and attended various music trade shows in the US.

For recreation, Lann enjoyed travelling to Palm Desert, where he owned a mobile home; he also enjoyed trips to San Francisco and Hawaii. For many years he travelled frequently to Washington state to visit his dear friend, Tom Breda.

Lann was active in the Victoria business community for decades until he moved his store back to Brentwood Bay and finally retired. He enjoyed life in his Brentwood Bay home; tending the garden, visiting with friends and playing with his canine companion, Quincey. Lann was a Mercedes and Lincoln enthusiast all his life, and took pride in owning many different models over the years. Despite failing health, Lann enjoyed shopping for and cooking gourmet meals for himself and his close friend and housemate, Troy Thompson.

Lann was a unique and gifted man, and lucky to have treasured, stalwart friends Troy Thompson and Bob Ferguson who supported him and his family members through his final illness. He was also fortunate to be cared for by dedicated health care workers at Saanich Peninsula Hospital and Victoria General Hospital who made his final days more comfortable.

He is survived by his intense sister, Anita Marie Copeland Kess; imposing brother-in-law, Dr. Joseph Kess; effervescent niece, Christina Marie Kess; and athletic great-nephews Malcolm Joseph Caldwell and Max Richard Caldwell, all of Victoria. He is also survived by his brilliant nephew, Dr. Tony Kess and creative niece-in-law Lynn Marie Kane; inquisitive great nephews Ebb Anthony Kane and Llewyn Forest Kane of St. John's, Newfoundland. He is predeceased by his parents, Forrest Lann Copeland, Sr, and Margaret Ruth Williams Copeland.

The family will hold a private gathering at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please make donations to the Saanich Peninsula Hospital Society.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

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