

Linda Demetry Cowan, 65, of Norman passed away on December 31, 2013 after a long and heroic battle against liver disease. She was born in Urbana, IL on November 21, 1948 to John M. and Mary Demetry. She grew up in Aurora, IL graduating from West High before enrolling in Michigan State University. She was always interested in helping people and graduated with a degree in nursing in 1970. To further her studies she enrolled in graduate school at Case Western University in Cleveland Ohio where she met her best friend and love of her life John Cowan, who was also attending Case Western Reserve. They were married the following May of 1971 in Aurora, IL. They then moved to College Park, MD where Linda received her Masters Degree in nursing education from the University of Maryland in 1972. She then worked as a research assistant and instructor at the University of Maryland developing a strong interest in medical research, particularly the spread of diseases, or epidemiology. Linda was enormously gifted in this field and was admitted to the Johns Hopkins University where she pursued her initial studies in breast cancer. She graduated with both a Masters in Public Health (1975) and Ph.D. (1979) from Johns Hopkins before accepting a post-doctoral fellowship to Harvard University where she did research in neuroepidemiology from 1978-1979. Linda and her husband then moved to Norman and Linda worked for four years (as an Assistant Member in the Lipids Research Clinic Program) at the OMRF in Oklahoma City before being hired in 1983 as an assistant professor in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology of the University of Oklahoma, becoming a full professor in 1995. She expanded her research studies to include heart disease, focusing on Native American populations, and later to neurological diseases, particularly epilepsy in children. In the last few years of her career she spent time in Africa helping to study parasites and to help prevent infectious diseases and improve public health.

She was a gifted teacher and researcher winning the OU Regents Award for Superior Teaching in 1993 and was named a George Lynn Cross Research Professor in 1996. She served 27 years of dedicated teaching, research and service in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, retiring in January of 2011. She published more than 100 papers in peer-reviewed journals and participated in more than 50 presentations at national scientific meetings. She was chair of the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology from October 1, 2007 to December 31, 2010. During this time she was instrumental in hiring a number of talented young faculty and increasing dramatically the size of her department. She served as the major advisor for eight doctoral and five MS graduates as well as mentoring dozens of MPH students.

In service to her country Linda served on 11 panels and committees for the National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine. These panels provided critical advice and guidance to our country regarding medical issues including the safety and efficacy of vaccines for children and veterans.

She spent her retirement traveling and visiting with many friends all over the world. She was great lover of art and enjoyed visiting many museums throughout the world. Linda also loved food, both eating it at fine restaurants in New York, and she loved to cook. She had many, many friends. Linda was kind, loving, caring, thoughtful and very smart and will be greatly missed by so many.

She was preceded in death by her mother Mary. She is survived by her husband John

of the home, her father Jack and wife Pat of Montgomery, IL, her brother Mike and wife Diane of Menomonee Falls, WI, and their children Kara, John and Josh; by her sister-in-law and niece Michelle and Anna Jo Cowan of Council Bluffs, IA; and by her mother-in-law Anna Cowan of Rockville, MD.

The family suggests that people donate to their favorite charities in her name. Linda was a great supporter of the Food Bank and National Public Radio.

A celebration of Linda's life will be held at a later date.