



Fiona Binder

July 30, 1971 - June 22, 2024

Fiona Louise Binder (1971-2024)

A joyful, radiant presence in the lives of all she touched, and a loving, loyal friend and companion to those lucky enough to be in her inner circle. She ate, drank, danced, worked, and traveled well with others.

Fiona Louise Binder, 52, of Memphis, TN. died on June 22nd, 2024 after a 27-month battle with cancer.

Born in Sydney, Australia on July 30th, 1971, to parents Hubert George Higgs and Elizabeth Anne Dries. Fiona was the youngest of nine children. She adored growing up in a household of so many big sisters and brothers, with all the noise, love, and seemingly unbelievable (yet true) stories one could imagine from a boisterous mob that size.

Fiona took an early interest in ballet, the years-long study of which saw many local amateur recitals and even a performance tour during the 1980s to what was then the U.S.S.R. Through her contacts in ballet she began performing as a professional showgirl in large variety entertainment productions, which included one stint in a circus! As a showgirl she entertained in Australia, Japan, Malaysia, and Korea, where she met her first husband, Aaron Upchurch, an American serviceman who, fortuitously for so many outside her

home country, brought her to the U.S. and eventually to Memphis, TN, around 1996.

Setting the showgirl feathers aside (at least professionally), Fiona worked for several years in retail at Men's Wearhouse, having a sharp eye for style and a knack for making dudes look much better leaving the store than when they came in. Her personability and effortless gifts for sales led her from retail clothing to the more lucrative market of automobiles. She spent some time at the Sunrise Buick GMC dealership before finding her long time happy work-home at Jim Keras Nissan in 2003, where she stayed for more than 20 years, leaving her position there as Finance Director for health reasons in May of this year.

Though Fiona's marriage to Aaron came to an end during her Memphis period, they remained friends and stayed in contact throughout her life. Newly single, Fiona decided to continue working until she could bankroll a comfortable return to Australia. Her plan, however, was delayed indefinitely by her encounter with Lance Binder in late 2002. Their courtship started rather unhurriedly, as Lance wasn't very quick on the uptake with regard to Fiona's interests (several stories could be inserted here), but they finally managed an official "first date" (another story) on June 13th, 2003.

What followed over the next twenty-one years might be described in such unoriginal language as "magical," "enchanted," and "fairytale-like," all of which surely would have made Fiona gag and possibly chunder (Aussie for 'puke'), but given that all are dead-on accurate, let us make at least some good use of her recent unavailability to demand edits: It was beyond magical, beyond enchanted, and better than fairytale-like.

With absolutely zero prior conversation about marriage, Lance proposed to Fiona on December 24th, 2004, during a stroll along the shore of the Persian

Gulf while visiting some of her family in Dubai. Fiona's affirmative answer sealed the deal, and on April 22nd, 2006, they were married in Urunga, Australia, in her mum and stepdad's backyard, with loads of family from both parties attending. They honeymooned on a small island on the Great Barrier Reef before returning to their midtown home in Memphis.

Back home their lives centered mostly around hard work, but always with an eye to what fun could be had whenever they were together. There were countless dinners, parties and events with friends, but Fiona and Lance enjoyed spending most of their free time as a couple, either wandering their midtown neighborhood, with its incredible variety of restaurants, breweries, and theaters, or preparing adventurous meals together at home. And there was always the weighty decision about which cocktail Fiona would make for what had early on become a standing weekday evening ritual.

They went on dozens of wonderful trips, usually as a couple but often as part of larger groups of like-minded fun folks. Many push pins were added to the world map mounted in their bedroom that said "Look – we've been there, and there, and there!"

But as much as she enjoyed visiting faraway places and experiencing new sights, sounds, and tastes, Fiona happily traded many such opportunities in order to get back to Australia to see family in familiar places, especially when it involved happy events like landmark birthdays and weddings, but also to share in sadness and celebration at funerals.

If Fiona wasn't doing any of the above, she could usually be found chilling with a book and her cat Slinky, or off practicing yoga at one of several local studios.

With her husband Lance, Fiona was an enthusiastic supporter of many local arts and entertainment organizations, including Ballet Memphis, Memphis Symphony Orchestra, The Orpheum, and WKNO.

So many wonderful times. But all good things....

Following an annual mammogram in March of 2022, Fiona was diagnosed with Metaplastic Breast Cancer (MBC), a rare and aggressive form of breast cancer, already stage four as it had spread to her liver. Over the next couple years she underwent dozens of chemotherapy and radiation treatments, multiple surgeries, and participated in several clinical trials, always believing that there would be another option to try as others failed. In the end the disease won out, but not until she'd squeezed as much as she could out of her time. In between treatments Fiona and Lance managed two more beautiful trips to Australia as well as several domestic getaways. She also continued to work at Jim Keras Nissan and attend the yoga classes she loved so much, until her condition made them impractical in May of this year.

Fiona faced her long cancer ordeal with unbelievable equanimity, never once bemoaning her fate or asking "Why me?" She remained grateful for the advantages she had from a resource and support perspective. Often she remarked how horrible it must be for those going through similar ordeals alone or those at risk of financial ruin. Or even worse, those who had to forgo life-saving or -extending treatments altogether, due to inadequate medical coverage.

A woman with a self-admitted vain streak, Fiona had always prided herself on physical health, poise, and presentation. As the effects of the disease wore away at her appearance and abilities, she met each change with a matter-of-fact attitude. "Well, there goes that!", and "I'll just keep lowering the bar," and "Just happy to still be here" were phrases heard more than once in the last

few months.

By the end of May 2024, it was obvious even to Fiona that time may be limited, so the families were notified to visit sooner rather than later. First week of June saw the arrival of three of her sisters, just prior to her admission to hospital on June 6th. Her mother soon followed, escorted by son-in-law Jeff, and many others arrived the following week, allowing Fiona to share some truly beautiful moments with family and friends in her last weeks with us.

She died peacefully, in her husband's arms, at 5:28 am on Saturday, June 22nd, at Methodist-University Hospital, where she'd received exceptional care during the final weeks of a too-short but amazingly full and well-lived life.

Fiona is survived by her husband and best friend Lance, mother Elizabeth (Ted), sisters Kerrie (Jeff), Glenys, Lynette (Rudy), Kathryn (Dale), and Elizabeth (David), brother Anthony (Rosa), lots of nieces and nephews, and Slinky. She loved the whole bunch!

She was preceded in death by her father Bert, brother Stephen, and sister Michelle.

Fiona had asserted more than once, convincingly, that she wasn't afraid of dying. She only expressed extreme annoyance that "if this shit takes me out" she'd be missing out on doing more of the things she loved with the people she loved. She was also irritated with the thought that 18-year-old Slinky might outlive her. (As was too often the case, Fiona was right.)

Fiona did not mince words. She didn't blow smoke. Fiona had let's say standards, clear and expressive limits to what she would and wouldn't put up with, and you always knew where you stood with her. But under this sometimes salty exterior, Fiona was a softie. Fortunately, most of us made the cut. Phew ...

Fiona's family would like to extend their most sincere appreciation to all the wonderful medical professionals at Baptist Cancer Treatment Center, SCRI Oncology Partners, and the Methodist hospital network who made Fiona's trials more bearable and oftentimes even pleasant through their personable interactions.

An open house remembrance will be held at Fiona and Lance's home for any wishing to drop by to pay their respects and share memories over a glass of bubbles or other light refreshment. And there will be snacks!

Tuesday, July 9th, from 4pm-7pm

2108 Vinton Av.

Memphis, TN. 38104

IN LIEU OF FLOWERS, MEMORIAL DONATIONS CAN BE MADE IN
FIONA'S MEMORY TO:
AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY OR HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Fiona was a beautiful firecracker and a beast with numbers. She didn't sugar coat her words but made sure you understood what she was saying and how it would benefit you. Gone but will never be forgotten .*



Yukita Manuel - August 20, 2024 at 11:34 AM



“ *What a beautiful and sweet woman I met at our class reunion Lance! My sincerest condolences my dear friend.*

Delia Midkiff - August 12, 2024 at 11:00 PM



“ *So many great memories of time spent with Fiona and Lance, usually over a pint or two at the Memphis Made tap room. My deepest and sincerest sympathies to Lance, Fiona's family, and all who knew and loved Fiona. Memories of her will certainly be a blessing.*

Damien Klingberg - July 09, 2024 at 09:25 AM

TH

“ Dear Lance and Family,

Not a day goes by as your across the street neighbors for many years(20 plus, is that possible!) that we don't miss Fiona or "Fiona and Lance" on the front porch. Endless in person small talks and conversations, that make daily life feel connected and solid and good. Also so many more dinners and events shared.

Many fun parties at their home and Garden parties at our house, and more recently dinners at their house(because our dogs are young and not well behaved), and two amazing Christmas dinners, during the Covid years!

It's hard to believe that I can't wander across the street to share difficulties, and blessings with Fiona, she listened..we shared many conversations about our love of dance and the performances by Ballet Memphis they attended during my many years as Ballet Mistress.

It is hard to articulate the loss of a strong, beautiful person who left this world so young...

We Louis and Tamara your neighbors will always think of "Fiona and Lance" inseparable in our minds, and will be right across the street!

Sending our condolences,

Love,

Tamara and Louis

Tamara Hoffmann - July 07, 2024 at 07:33 PM

KE

Beautiful words , xxx

Kerrie - July 07, 2024 at 08:46 PM

BF

“ *Sincere condolences to you Lance, and the to the entire immediate and extended family and friends!*

I'm going to forever miss this beacon of light, one who cared more about them than them themselves!

*I will remember you forever as I struggle through the tears like many others do- life just gets a little tougher to do without you!
God bless my sweet friend*

Bernard D Farber- South Africa (in that thick Fiona knock off accent)

Bernard Farber - July 02, 2024 at 04:55 PM

AA

“ *Fiona was a shining beacon in the dark. I remember the moment that I knew that I loved her. We were at the Sheraton Walker Hill resort in Seoul where Fiona worked when she heard that her brother Stephen had passed away. Her grief was consuming, but as the tears fell I witnessed her light shine through and she began to tell me stories of her brother and she found the strength to smile. She could always find the inner joy. May she rest in peace and may her memory be a beacon to us all.*

Aaron - July 02, 2024 at 10:37 AM

KE

Beautiful words, Aaron xxxx

Kerrie - July 02, 2024 at 04:13 PM

KH

“ Zooming down Union Ave in one of her many cool cars
Popping champagne 🍷 before midday on a Sunday
Balancing anywhere when the opportunity arose
Hosting many a lovely Christmas with us
Enjoying a good lamb chop (with the tail thanks very much)
Being a wonderful little sister and aunty to my kids
Bringing Lance into our family
..... Always in our hearts 💕💕 Love Kerrie and Jeff xxxx



Kerrie Honsa - July 01, 2024 at 08:47 PM

RL

“ Whenever I heard the roar of her Corvette engine in the parking lot of the yoga studio, I knew I had better have a good class ready. Marshall & I are grateful for every moment we shared with this exceptional soul and her beloved Lance.

Rebecca Lesley-Paulk - July 01, 2024 at 08:20 PM

PK

“What a light, fun and feisty in the best way! I’ll always associate a certain pepperminty coffee creamer (with a bit of something extra) around the holidays with Fiona. Loved arriving back home to visit in Memphis and my Dad, Tim Cannon, pulling it out of the door of the refrigerator and saying “Look what Fiona made.” Sounds delicious even on this hot, California summer day! I’ll remember the joyful reception and hugs I got from her with all the questions about college and life when I surprised Dad at the Sunrise office. She will be missed and never forgotten. Sending prayers for your family and friends.

Love, Paige (Cannon) Killian

Paige Killian - July 01, 2024 at 06:45 PM

ED

Yesterday I heard Peter Allen singing I Always call Australia home, and remember how Fiona loved hearing that song when she was flying Qantas into Sydney, she always called here home, I will miss her forever, Fiona, love you. Mum.

Elizabeth Dries - July 14, 2024 at 07:18 PM