

NEIL GRAHAM THATCHER OBITUARY

RAPID CITY, SD. After a final curtain call, Neil Graham Thatcher exited this earthly stage on May 31, 2018. He was born in 1939 in Sioux Falls, SD and raised in Kensington, CA near Berkeley, to a mother involved in community theatre and a father who was an opera singer and choir conductor. He received his first make up kit when he was five, thus beginning a lifetime in the theatre. He directed or performed in more than 200 community and professional theatre productions around the country and appeared in numerous films and commercials. His longest running role was as loving husband to Anna Marie, whom he met at the Black Hills Playhouse in 1968. Self described as a "happy guy," his mantra was "*Carpe Diem*" and he fully appreciated every day.

Graham was a man of words who loved language. He authored *I Know What I Like: Everyone's Guide to the Arts*, numerous philosophical essays and many memorable letters to the editor. He was also a playwright and authored several plays, including three in which he performed as Clarence Darrow, Sir Thomas More and Justice William O. Douglas. He cofounded Periakto Productions with his wife and business partner to use theatre as a teaching tool in Continuing Legal Education. From 1992 to 2016 they presented their "CLE Theatre" programs on ethics in the practice of law to all parts of the country.

While he was a most memorable actor, whether in the classroom, on the stage, in a business boardroom or in a social setting, Graham Thatcher was, at his core, a teacher. And for that he will be best remembered. A gentle and humble soul, he wanted no resume as an obituary. He was never one to "toot his own horn." Others had to do it for him and they did, in life and in his passing. Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." In the notes after his passing, it is evident that Graham's presence has affected eternity, and his students, friends and colleagues now write his legacy.

- *"Graham was my very first vocal production coach for the stage. He taught me so much on and off the boards. Much, of which, I use in my theatre classes today. I will miss your muse, your wit, your grace and your never-ending support. May your celestial journey be filled with rogue and peasant slaves, greasepaint, footlights and infinite applause ... until we meet again, my friend."*
- *"Graham was my friend, my mentor and a huge influence in my career. His spirit will be with me always."*

- *"A special man who impacted so many will be remembered for helping them understand anything is achievable with imagination and commitment. Lucky to have known him. Better for having learned from him. Honored to always remember him."*
- *"Graham's confidence in me and my abilities and my opinions gave me confidence to take on challenges I might otherwise not have taken. ... I am grateful for Graham's impact on my life."*
- *"He was bold, gifted, opinionated, honest, intelligent and such an incredible actor and director. His life was varied and amazing from teaching to professional acting to spending his later years teaching lawyers and others to be better communicators. ... My heart is heavy for ... the loss of this great person whose spirit will remain with us forever. You will find, much to Graham's surprise, how very many people were influenced, inspired and encouraged by him. His reach and impact was enormous in so many ways."*

Although not a religious man in a traditional sense, Graham was a deeply spiritual being and believed that we are all connected in spirit. He fully believed that we are all stardust and William Shakespeare's writing from *Romeo and Juliet* provides an appropriate epitaph:

*"When he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun."*

A new star lights the night sky and it will shine forever.

Grateful for having shared life's stage with Graham are his wife and soul mate of 48 years, Anna Marie, foreign exchange daughter Isabel Herguera of Dusseldorf, Germany, foreign exchange sister in law Chie (Nori) Otsubo of Marugame, Japan, sister Pam (Doug) Hauser of Moraga, CA, brother Russ (Leanna) Staines of Merida, Yucatan, cousin Wally (Sharon) Doolittle of Sioux Falls, SD, brothers in law Jay (Susan) DeVoss of Ft. Wayne, IN, Bruce (Nancy) Teachout of Yankton, SD, Bryan (Lisa) Teachout of Rapid City, SD, Brent (Lonie) Teachout of Piedmont, SD,

honorary grandson Thatcher Diamond Hartman, several nephews, nieces, god children and extended family members, and the many friends and fans he garnered during his lifetime.

“Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince. And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”