

Leda's 50th Birthday Book

With love from your devoted fans!



BOOK FOUNDING MOTHERS

Andrea Buffa

Alex Samuels

Suzanne Hawkes

BLOOD

Mom

Steve and Bonni

Carrie

Ginny

AJ

Merry

Sharone, Lani and Shira

SISTERS

Lauren

Erica

Rebekah

Naomi

FRIENDS and CHOSEN FAMILY

Phyllis

Rick Stover

Ronit Avni

Tate Hausman

Patrick R

Keith

Daniel Gulko

Jules Beckman

Rachel Kaplan

victoria mcnichol Kelly

Diana Winston

Kristin & Bess

Liza

Shayna Englin

Jason Mogus

Laura Saponara

Judith Ansara

Rachel Heron

Angela Bausch

Riki Bloom

Elanne Kresser

Debby, Dan, Meirav & Gavi

Carol Swann
Leigh Hollowgrass
Rachel Hollowgrass
Clara Hollowgrass
Rachel Levi
Shari Krell & Bonnie Kimmel
Lisa Griffin
Emily Freedman
Jennica Peterson
Laura Maestrelli

ANDY CLAN
Fe Coffers
Janice and Nadav
Beth Kaufman
Jill
Cliff and Cristi
Kelly, Roger and Allie Gaines

MOON AND BACK
Jaren
Raina
Andy

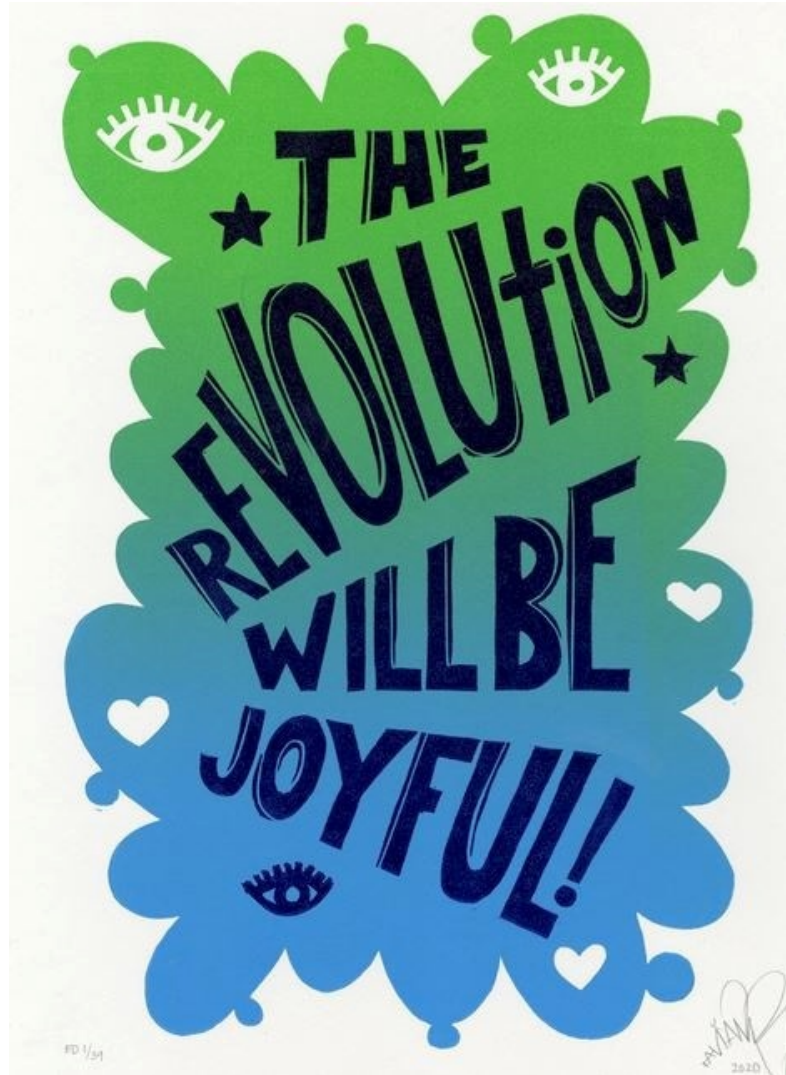
Andrea Buffa (from San Francisco)

Leda! Happy, happy birthday, amiga!

I am so happy you came in to my life 20-something years ago (!) I remember sitting with you in my backyard in Oakland (the backyard that was eventually yours and Andy's) and talking about everything from dating services to starting a nonprofit consulting firm together. Well, that conversation about dating and relationships really did the trick, didn't it?! And even though we didn't get to start a firm together, we have definitely been able to keep raising hell together, and I'm happy to do that with you ANY time. You know why? It's because no matter how serious the issue is you're confronting, you always bring joy and openness and laughter and curiosity to everything you do. I wanna be that way too!

I'm so glad you were born, my friend!

Love,
Andrea



Art credit: Favianna Rodriguez

Alexandra Samuel (from Vancouver, BC)

Fifteen years ago we sat in a Seattle doughnut shop and compared how we were each feeling about our impending 35th birthdays. You were so clear that you wanted to share your future birthdays with a partner and family.

I have thought about that conversation over and over again over the years, as I have watched your story unfold. I reflected on it when I heard the joy in your voice as you told me about Andy, and when I saw the love between the two of you the first time we all met. I remembered your birthday wish when you welcomed Jaren and Raina, and when I saw you fall into the swoon of motherhood in a way that is unparalleled by any other parent I know. I think of it every time I get to see you as a family, and feel the love, compassion and delight in the home you have built together.

And here we are, fifteen years later! We've packed so many wonderful visits and conversations into this decade and a half. There aren't too many people who can get serious about politics, nerd out about tech, explore the finer parts of personal writing, and dig into the tender parts of parenting—all in one phone call. Every time we connect it feels like we are picking up the thread of a conversation that we left off just a day or two before, and also, have continued for fifteen years.

I feel so lucky to have witnessed the beautiful unfolding of your life during this period, and to see you layer so many new identities with intention and integrity: Heartfelt partner. Fierce mama. Cancer advocate. Each layer somehow deepens, rather than displaces, the pieces I already knew and loved: Social justice ally. Soul sister. Inspired creative.

May this coming year free you to bring that energy back into the world. We all need more Leda!

Yours with so much love,

Alex



Oakland family visit, August 2015

Suzanne Hawkes (from Vancouver, Canada)

Leda, it is nearly impossible to believe there was a time we didn't know each other, when you weren't my closest friend and sister in spirit, if not blood. But it all started in June 2006. You picked a few of us up in the San Francisco airport to drive out to Petaluma, for the first session of Robert Gass' Art of Change. You swept out of the car, brimming with confidence, joy, warmth and baddassery. In seconds, you had us all organized and packed up and ready to hit the road. I was in awe. That 12-month journey changed all of our lives - but the most powerful thread of that change has been your friendship. You are the most brilliant, kind, fierce, hilarious, life force I have ever encountered; a true leader and dearest sister-friend who stands out among humans. So shiny! It is an absolute blessing to have you in the world and in my life - and to feel the continuous, steady resonance of your presence, love, vulnerability and soul-sisterhood in every moment.

Love, Suzanne



2006: Petaluma, Earthrise Institute - when we met



2006-7: Art of Change changed everything



2013: Riding the San Francisco bus!



2014: Best 50th birthday greeting ever for me!



2017: Alexandra, Leda and Suzanne day sailing in English Bay



2017: Hiking on Bowen Island



2017: Leda steers the Encore straight through English Bay



2018: Point Reyes day trip with Andy



2019: One for the Inspiration Board ~ 2020: Mini-holiday at the Claremont

Mom

Today, I CELEBRATE SCOUTSEVEN LEDA -- the embarking, launching, navigating, tacking, re-charting, sometimes disembarking and then later starting anew, Leda -- my daughter of 50 years! Isn't that something...

I celebrate the ScoutSeven you, VENTURING FORTH ON MANY JOURNEYS of outer and inner discovery, recalling your first official scouting mission for the Berkeley Guides fresh out of Cal. Off you went, on your own, to the France of your fantasies, to get the updated scoop and write it down for publication. Many missions followed. I was in awe each time, and proud, standing on the shore watching you launch off, with just your wits, into unknown places, unknown cultures or a new community of people and engagement.

I celebrate all the times I've watched you GO GO GO, and land, into these new territories, of both place and inner space, with your signature curiosity and open mind -- and bringing always your baseline LOVING and COMPASSIONATE heart.

This year, I especially want to celebrate the way you go toward JOY at warp speed with your vibrant sense of PLAY! Such a gift to your children, and all

those connected to you. Even the journey you didn't choose these past four years has not dampened this essential element of your Leda Spirit. And let's not forget your Wonder-Woman, and other Marvels, Air-Bender, and Star Trek loving, laugh out loud and laugh at yourself, Leda. I want to celebrate that!

Now you begin your 51st year, heading into adventures that await and that you will create -- your world of future possibilities. I'm waving you off feeling your ScoutSeven spirit! I'm filled with gratitude for all I've watched of you, and shared with you, and for all you've given to me (including all those times you've Celebrated me!).

It seems fitting to share this one cherished memory: from our trip almost twenty years ago for my 50th birthday — waking up in our little bungalow at Rio Caliente, Mexico, and hearing first thing, your sweet voice say, "Happy Birthday, Mom." Now here we are celebrating YOUR 50th. A beautiful synchronicity. "Happy Birthday to YOU, my beloved daughter, Leda.

All my love, all my heart, Mom



At the Rio Caliente, August 2000 — a cherished memory. A beautiful & important trip.

Steve and Bonni

To our sweet Leda on
her 50th

So many experiences, so
many memories. What to
say? We admire you. We
respect you. We're grateful
for having you and Andy and
Jaren and Raina in our life.

We love you so much.

Happy Birthday
Magnifico!



LEDA!

- A big heart
- A caring soul
- A creative brain
- A determined spirit
- A fierce mama
- A loving partner
- A great friend



Caroline Dederich (from Home in Encinitas, CA)

When I was ten,
I was rather zen.

When I was twenty,
I traveled the world a'plenty.

When I was thirty,
I was fancy-free and flirty.

When I was forty,
Beloved husband and children added to my inventory.

But now I am fifty, and grateful as ever,
that my story lives on, today and forever.

(Inspired by A.A. Milne)

To our beautiful and incomparable Leda:
Happy 50th birthday to you, with love always!! Blake, Carrie, Charlie &
Natalie



Ginny D (from Visalia CA)

Dear precious Leda,

Having known you from your earliest years, I can truly say that you have been special to me for a very long time. Even before we became "related" [!], I was grateful to be able to get to know you when you were in The School, and have fond memories of tucking you in at night and watching over you.

After your Grandpa and I got married, I got to know Jady and you even better... and I have the most amazing collection of notes and letters from you, going back as far as 1977!... as well as some fun and amazing drawings you sent me. You talk about times we spent together, and goodies we shared with each other, and you also shared some fun insights and news with me about different experiences you and your friends were having. In many notes you called me "little grandma"... how truly and deeply heartwarming to read through these now.

There is also a copy of a note that Grandpa Chuck sent to you, thank you for your part in helping me learn to SWIM! You might even remember that :)

You talk about some special visits we had back then, but a more recent one I remember was when you were a busy young professional in San Francisco, and I going to visit there for a Macintosh experience... we found out that Lily Tomlin would be in S.F. also, so we got tickets and had a 'girls' night out' that will always be a special memory for me. It was so great to spend that quality time with you.

So I now send you all possible 'up-to-date' love on the occasion of your 50th birthday... and I hope we can have another special visit together before too long.

Love always, "Grannie Ginn"

AJ Ross (from Home in CA)

My dearest cuz,

You with an open and wide heart.

You eager to smile and laugh.

You who is strong, curious, persistent, vulnerable, and kind.

You who is light and love and the best hugger.

You who connects, contributes, and creates.

You who's got superpowers on top of your superpowers.

You who makes the world better.

Happy birthday to you!



Matching green cousins - 12/4/2002

Merry (from Portland OR)

Dearest Leda. How happy I am to contribute something for your 50th birthday.

Though we haven't seen each other in quite a few years, I have such special memories of seeing you as a mom with your children. The love just poured out of you. Of course, this is in comparison to knowing you as a young child.

Happy happy birthday warrior.

*With love,
Aunt Merry*

Sharone, Lani, and Shira

Dear Leda,

Happy 50th to our favorite first cousin in the United States!

We wish we could be celebrating this milestone with you in person, the way our Long Island relatives did in the old days. We would toast your zest for life, your perseverance and resilience, your gift for words, and your fierce love for your family. We would tell stories about hula-hooping and pen pal letters, about visiting you when we were kids living in the same state but in vastly different communities, about having first babies at 38 (3 of us!), and about sharing a grandmother with a million names. We'd hug you so hard but gently, even though you're enviably taller than any of us (especially Shira!).

We appreciate how generously and eloquently you've shared the challenges of the past few years and kept us all feeling connected to you. We are eagerly awaiting our next cousin get-together.

All our love,

Sharone, Lani, and Shira (from Portland, Stockton, & San Carlos)



Sharone's Wedding in Portland - August 1998



Cousins in San Carlos: Sheridan, Shira, Sharone, Lani, and Leda - October 2005



Shira, Zoe, Leda, and Jaren - January 2010



Family Gathering in Stockton with Aunt Flo - June 2011 ~ Cousins in San Francisco: AJ, Brooke, Leda, Shira, and Lani - August 2016

Lauren B (from San Francisco)

I remember your orthopedic shoes, attached by a metal bar that you wore at night (were they white leather?), and you walking in this contraption down the hallway towards me, your nightgown swaying, backlit by the nightlights that ran along the baseboard. This is my earliest memory of you, and I don't know if it's real.

My next memory is from several years later, when we were maybe four. Our parents were still married, and we were on a boat in Tomales Bay. I was seasick, lying on a fiberglass bench when a mother - yours or mine - caught a shark. Later, your parents thought they had both hooked a fish, but it was just their lines tangled together under the boat. We ate crab in the wharf on paper placemats.

We've been together, growing side by side our whole lives. I know who you were then and how you became who you are today. All this time, you carried with you a heart so big it sometimes weighed you down. When I see Raina and Jaren feasting on this love of yours, I know it was all worth it. They have enough love and warmth to last a lifetime. They are so young, and you have already given them what they will most need in this life.

I love you Leda.

LB



We trusted each other ~ You always knew you were beautiful

Erica (from Brussels)

Happy birthday to my very first sister. We were born one week apart. We shared the same bosoms who fed us as babies. We comforted each other, giggled a lot, drooled a lot too, and waddled to wherever we could. Soon, we were up on our 2 feet, doing body check, learning to read and write and scribbling in the green room or was it the orange. Part of a social experiment, but to me, you were my family. Half a century later, I write you and continue to love you for the gentle soul, reflective character, accepting being you always have been. No matter, what you are my leedabeeda and I'm Ricky to you.



Rebekah Crawford (from Brussels)

Leda, I can't believe I can actually say that I've known you for 50 years!!!!

These are three things that have always stood out for me about you:

- 1) Your wisdom.
- 2) Your strength
- 3) Your desire to make the world a better place.

Wisdom: I remember taking a walk with you at the Strip, when we must have been about 12 years old, discussing the origins of the universe or some such heady stuff. I think we were imagining a world that mirrored our own that was a reflection of our world or something like that - a universe that floated just out of sight. I remember thinking to myself that you were surprisingly deep and that having philosophical conversations was something I'd always be able to have with you. I was right. It's so easy to pick up our conversations, to speak our hearts, to talk not just about our ourselves but about the universe and it has always been a joy to me to share that with you.

Strength: Leda, you did not have an easy time growing up. I don't think I know someone stronger than you. Any other child would have turned on her family, would have buckled under the pressure to be "negative," to be an asshole, to fit in. You stoically refused to cave in your principles or your ethics in exchange for being "popular." I remember grudgingly respecting you; it was impossible not to respect you even if I disliked your choices. Often, it felt like we were on different teams. Not necessarily adversaries but just not on the same side. And then we'd have one of our conversations that always made my mind spin and expand in so many ways and once again, I'd be forced to respect you. And because of your intelligence it was impossible to dismiss you. You had an aura that commanded attention and a power that seemed to wrap around you like an invisible cloak, protecting you.

You have always had vision. When you were living in D.C., we had a conversation about having children. You had just met Andy, I think, or it was right before you met him, and I remember trying to advise you to have a baby without waiting for a "father." You listened calmly to me and I spoke what I thought were real pearls of

wisdom - "men come and go but children will always be your children," etc. You patiently let me finish and then you told me you were planning to meet the man of your dreams and have children with him. I hung up feeling rather bemused. A part of me knew you would make that happen. And indeed you did.

No matter what has been going on in your life, your super power has always been your desire to make the world a better place. While most people have tried to improve their own small lives, you've always thought of how to improve the world. How can the world be better? How can we help other people? What changes can we make to improve less fortunate people's life circumstances? I'm in awe of your magnitude and your unerring sense of being on the right side of history. For so many years I believed that when the world imploded, I needed to find you so you could lead us back into the light. Personally, I've always thought of you as Liberty Leading the People from the painting by Delacroix. Because your integrity has always been intact, I know that your morals and your ethics have never been compromised. I don't think I've ever heard you say a bad thing about anybody; you don't waste your time talking shit about people and that quality alone helps make the world a better place.

Thank you for being my friend even when I haven't always deserved it. Thank you for visiting me wherever I've been in the world - Los Angeles, New York, Paris, Brussels, San Francisco. You've always been a world traveler and I've always counted on you to cross oceans. Thank you for all the wonderful conversations we've had over the years, for exploring astrology with me, for not batting an eye whenever I've gone on some esoteric bent. Thank you for joining me on those trips! Thank you for always expanding my mind and offering other ways of looking at things. Thank you for staying true to who you are.

I love you. And I look forward to many more occasions for you to make my mind spin.

Reb

Naomi Crawford (from Petaluma)

Oh my what to say... our friendship is old and could've been laid to waste, walked away from, left to be a distant thing. But our sisterhood drew us to each other for all these decades, and with time, our love and respect has grown and blossomed. I am forever grateful that we've shared this life together, this world together, and even a cancer journey together! I am also forever in awe of you for your spirit is one of authenticity and generosity and joy and connectivity. Essentially, I want to be you when I grow up. I love you enormously and wish this 50th to be your best birthday yet!



Phyllis (from Bellingham)

My dearest Leda! I have a very unique relationship with you as Auntie Phyl especially because I have known you longer than anyone except for your Mom and Dad. I helped to take care of you, I even nursed you occasionally (I had a lot of milk!!). I have many sweet memories of you and your childhood. I also was one of your teachers, in about the 5th grade. You were so behind in math, and I was proud of you because you excelled in three grades in one year. It didn't surprise me. You are so bright, both in intelligence and spirit. You are a loving woman, a wonderful mother, and a courageous, growing Being. You will always hold a very special place in my heart. And on this birthday, I say "YES" to Leda, "YES" to your life. May each day be a Blessed one. I love you very much. Happy Birthday. Age is only a number.

Auntie Phyl

Rick Stover (from Waltham Massachusetts)

Happy Birthday Leda! A big one! I'm remembering back to when we met. I think you were 21! So perhaps it's appropriate that we met in a bar - the Bison. I remember seeing you walk in and thinking "Wow, who. is. that?" No simple answer to that question, as I soon came to know! Our roads definitely diverged but happily they've crossed periodically, at what have seemed to be significant moments. Probably you being there made them significant to me. One time we were in my kitchen in Oakland and my daughter (who is now a son) was about 3. She was magnetically attracted to you. You picked her up and started swinging her around and she LOVED it. You said it was your contact skills but I think the chemistry ran deeper. Another time was last time I saw you at your house in Berkeley, hanging out with your kids in your kitchen. Here's a picture from then. Look at Raina grinning about her sticker project. Definitely some chemistry there too! It's sad I have so few pictures of you! I looked through a bunch. I did find this one from my 10th anniversary party in 2006 that you graciously officiated. Turn turn turn. We never know where life is going to lead us, but I feel so lucky that our friendship has been a touch stone all these years. SO, being so much older than you, I feel obliged to share some insight. Not sure if this counts as wisdom or even insight for that matter, but I'll tell you this. My 50's have been my best decade. Here's hoping yours will be as well. To you my friend forever. Cheers! ~Rick





Ronit Avni (from Washington, DC)

Amazing to think we met two decades ago at the Ruckus Society Tactical Tech Camp in Sebastopol, CA. One of my earliest memories is of us going into a swimming hole together. It's a vague memory but you're standing in the sunshine waist-deep and smiling. I remember having a conversation, getting to know you and really appreciating your grounded, positive energy.

How could I forget your taking the leap and coming to Jerusalem to join me in the earliest days of Just Vision? I had an idea then, but not clarity about how it would manifest or an understanding of how tech works. You came when it was dangerous and early and hard. You tried to impart your wisdom and gentle guidance. You were kind and firm. One of my most vivid memories is of you taking your camera to the scenes of bombings and mayhem. You walked into the chaos, you remained calm, you wanted to learn and witness and gain deeper understanding. It was hard but you didn't want to look away.

I remember coming to visit you when your son was first born -- a bundle in the 4th trimester. You were the first to introduce me to the concept of a 4th trimester. Your home was quiet and calm. You seemed incredibly at peace.

The last time I saw you was just before your diagnosis. You had found a lump but were feeling healthy and strong. I was just starting out a new venture and we had a decadent dinner. It was so wonderful to see you so happy, loving motherhood and your two amazing munchkins. I met your whole family. They were and are beautiful.

When we last spoke it was before COVID. You wanted to visit Washington, DC and get together. I was worried I'd be traveling during Spring Break. Everything has changed.

I miss you, Leda. I wish you sunshine and calm, ease and beauty. I would love to host your family in DC on Spring Break or anytime that works for you. We'll make it work.

Sending you so much love as you enter this next decade. May you continue to walk through this storm as you did in 2003 -- holding the enormity of it all but still standing in the sunshine, smiling.

Sending so much love.



Jerusalem, 2003



Jerusalem, 2003

Keith

Leda Leda Leda

I feel so lucky and honored

To be your chosen family

We choose each other

Year after year

And I am so grateful for your enduring _____!

And by that I mean, your enduring love, witness, praise, care, and conversation.

I deeply treasure our unhurried and ongoing conversation...

Talking, observing, critiquing, commenting, listening, feeling...

Checking in.

Working it out.

Family activism racism social change community healthcare body beauty
wisdom education children age gender social media donating voting hair
cancer everything.

Thank you for welcoming and including me, again and again, into your heart, which includes your family as well as your shadows and fears.

I never take us for granted
And I always look forward to the next shared moment

Blessing to your parents on the 50th anniversary of your birth
Congratulations
Mazel tov
Blessed be

All my love
Forever
Keith













Daniel Gulko (from Sweden)

Leda you are a massive presence in my life, I am made better by knowing you. You came into my life in a chaotic time, and offered brilliance, tenderness, humour and clarity. Now, 25 years later, when my life is shockingly similar to that jagged period, I think of you, my example of bravery and hope to overcome my own limits. I know of no person with more goodness than you, you are my measure. We had years of poetic exchanges that made me believe in the worthiness of my own life. I can only offer you one of our exchanges from back then, and this poem tribute from long ago returned to my weathered clarity. I love you dear, and hold you near.

Gulko

From Leda 23 December 1997

time folds in on itself and my journey turns into a dream

keith s cave holds me at night

my heart feels empty and ready to explode

i am solo

vision quest into my bones

the lungs carry on

crying for something

or someone i don t long for

illusions break one by one

and my alone is happy

alone is happy

new to me, yes

dancer body
spread out on the floor
late at night
she is quiet now

we had an all night jam for solstice
at 2am i didn t want anyone but the ocean
so i went and bowed to the waves
singing through the howling wind

i ponder dreams and work and more dreams
frighteningly unafraid
and that s my tale for tonight
i will go now and roll on the floor
massaging the contours of my soul

hearty love

leda dear,
you are in that special state after journeying, when the movement begins.
beautiful words, beginning of a dig, archeology of the soul. empty heart, filled to the bursting point.
broken hearts are the ragged outcome of expansion, where love has a natural inclination to fill any
empty space. it heals, closing the torn edges, each time growing bigger. when we are open, then no
barriers can throttle love s expanding and the heart becomes a balloon, lifting one high out of the

city into a vastness uncontainable except within the microscopic knowing of the soul's invisible molecules. love is a gas. enjoy the dances and the waves. and if it could interest you, sounds like a good time to be writing down your dreams - keep pencil and paper next to bed, do it first thing before distractions and write even if you don't remember, the hands gentle nudge often guides the mind.

Leda's Poem

She strides into the breach.
She is both wing and water, following the light.

I watch her from the large stone that I have settled heavily.
That body tests herself in the calm waters, unlike Narcissus, it is not her shimmer she admires, but the tangible medium that permits it.
That mind is attracted to the heat of dreams, unlike Icarus, she needs no wax wings since she is both aquatic and aerial.
These tragic characters are more my familiars, from so many disappointing dunks and dissipated desire. I'd put her in the camp of Aphrodite, warrior goddess, surrounded by her attendants : splendour, good cheer and abundance. All these Greek names are just stand-ins for the older earthen forces. Later taken into the Christian weave.
All cracks allow light to enter. This bird strides into openings, she has a fearlessness and a will for justice. This makes cracks enticing to her. And the flawed do not fluster her.
She is both Eve and the prostitutes. She is strong with love, desire and rage. A creative force.

There is also a calm point, a moment of pregnant expectation before conception. I observe the animal talent, knowing where the havens are, and investing in them and protecting them. Though we rarely picture it, swans lay eggs in calm dry places away from the swirl and wait on their humid curiosity.

From that brittle round package pokes a pointed insistence followed by such a sweet descending softness that we name it down. This in turn ends in two yellow feet renting the calcium cape, striding the breach, waddling waterwards.

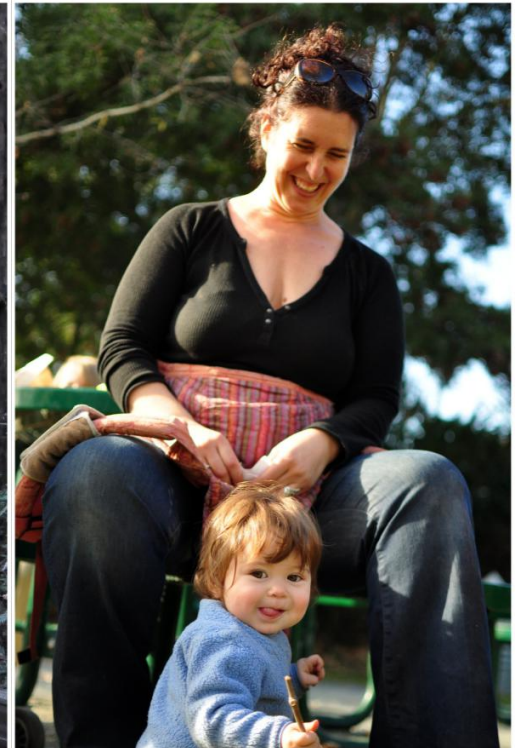
Water fills the openings in a stone barrier, inundating and opening it further. Like a wave breaking against a cliff, searching for the opening, creating it, and rushing to fill it, our friendship was immediate, absolute and ferociously engaged. I have been fashioned by our meeting, and I am made more spacious from it.

The breach, untidily adores the flow.
They have made their rendez-vous, dancing tidally in a whole ballroom of ocean.
The orchestra plays to the bass drum thump of that creature's blood, with occasional snare drum rolls for the tricky steps.
A breach just can't say no to a flow.
It's in their wet and salted nature, as laughter calls to tears, and memory lusts after the future.

If you should meet a swan call her Leda in the dim of the dawn.
Leda strides into breach, and all creatures know, breach adores flow.



Leda & Gulko, La Villette, Paris



Family in Muir Woods, 2015

Jules Beckman (from Aubagne, France)

Welcome to the club, Leda! We're in our 50's now. I got here 5 years and few months ago. It's my favorite decade so far. I think you're gonna love it. Let the Wisdom Age commence. (I was gonna put three exclamation points at the end of that last sentence but then thought it would be more wisdom y to leave them off. Now I'm making you think them without having actually typed them out. I'm still tricky that way.

You know how I feel about you.

I don't need to go and on here about how immediately, at first sight,

I felt at home in your presence, in your gaze, and have always basked in your radiant presence as the source of life giving light it is.

I don't need to say that you have always had a special power to make me automatically breathe easier.

To say you're goodhearted is to say the ocean is a little damp.

Everyone here leaving comments loves and adores you and I'm just like them and we make a web of love around you to catch you when you want or need catching. Our love is a safety net to the degree that falling is a factor. And it is. Always. Regardless.

Love,

Love's mother,

and the whole extended Love family,

Jules

Rachel Kaplan (from Petaluma)

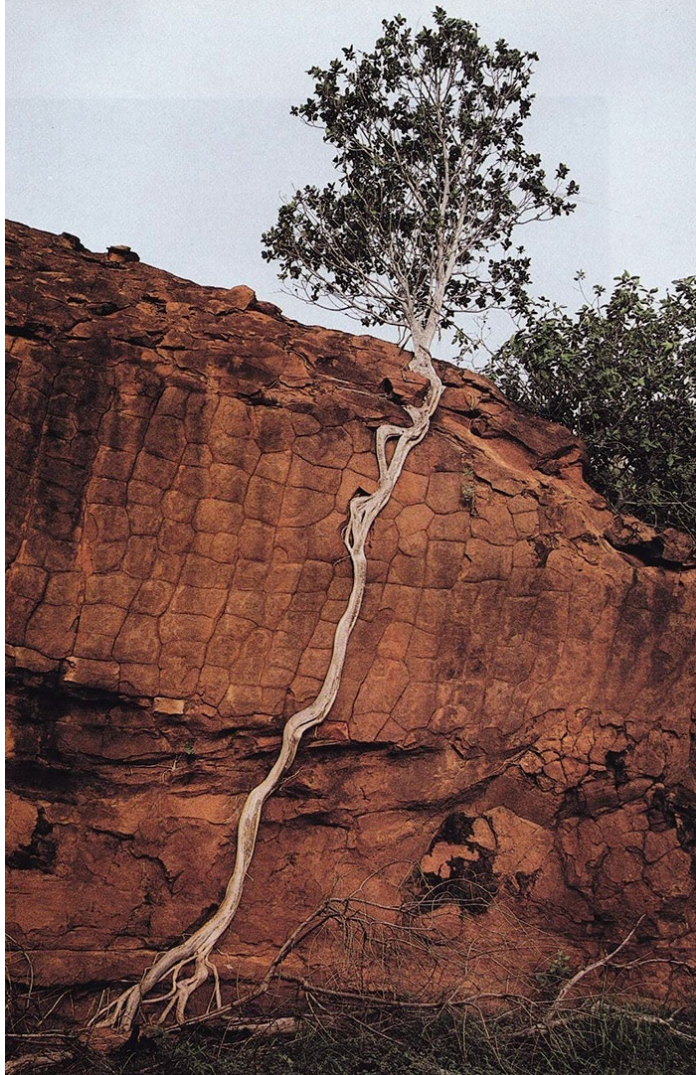
dear leda,

i am so deeply happy that you have arrived at the day of your 50th birthday. You know it's true when i say i have sat vigil now for many mothers/women in these last few years who have been visited by cancer. Your process has been inspiring -- the changes you have had to go through, the pivot you are mastering... I am so in alignment with your longevity and hope you can feel me behind you. Sitting in the hot tub... offering Reiki to you at night under the moon is how I often reach out to you even when we are separated by space and covid and what the hell ever.

Are we supposed to talk about something other than the long hand of Death as we honor your life? I will when you will... Thank you for your courage in facing and naming the darkness so boldly. I am moved by how you are living through this outrageous provocation and growing from it.

I have witnessed you for many years deepening and widening your love for yourself, and seen so much grace and power in you. I feel I have known you since you were "very young" -- remembering you long ago -- a dancer, a seeker, someone feeling her loneliness and longing for love. I have been happy to witness you growing in your personal and political stance of deep integrity, becoming a partner and a mother, and offering a gift to the world through your presence.

I love you Leda and I wish you many blessings on this milestone birthday. So happy you are here on this earthwalk with us all, and sending you much love and anticipation of more relationship with you in the years to come.



rooting



spreading



what we can't accept



sending you a kiss and blowing the cancer out of your body xoxo

Victoria McNichol Kelly (vi) (from new joisey!)

Hello sweet Leda!

What the heck!? You re turning fifty!!! Allow me to welcome you to the cool kids club, sister!

I have been searching for a photo of us & cannot seem to find anything(must be embedded somewhere in email exchanges), so I included some photos of simple beauty around & about my house & hood, plus pie (don t need to explain pie), and a colored pen drawing that was inspired by a flower Raina drew(big yellow one in center-ish), that she didn t care too much for in the moment, but I found promising... back from when I was playing Poppins.

What to say to you on this happy birthday, Leda? For some reason the fact that some of our friends, peripherally or closely in common, seem to be surprised at our maintaining our friendship over years & miles, is first in my mind. Nothing negative to report there, just the surprise, which actually still surprises me somewhat, because really, who wouldn t expect two outspoken, thoughtful, optimistic, easy laughers with unruly hair to get along?

As we discovered in July 2019 (oh so long ago, or oh so yesterday?), when Andy asked me how we met, I have no memory of a first meet of you. I think we met before that Thanksgiving at Sarasota(sp?) where you ate laced pumpkin pie; but it couldn t have been much prior to that, as I don t think either of us had a clear image of the other yet.

Other than that Thanksgiving image of not really knowing you, there hardly seems a time that I haven t known you, even though we had each lived a fair amount of life before we met.

I love that we worked on that Tara Brandel show together, that you are one of those women I got to sing with, to create original songs with. I love that you sing, you have a beautiful, rich voice.

You are the one who reminds me to talk about money, Leda. Not everybody wants to talk about money, & I admire that you continually keep that a part of the dialogue; that women need to talk about money. Seemingly small considerations that make us think differently about money & our worth in the world.

You are one of the people I wished lived on my street, or at least close enough to walk on over to see, I'd bring a pie to trade for some cookies! We could meet up for tea more easily, or a walk in the park, or down by the bay... and I would, when our now pandemic times are more rearview, hug you when we meet & hug you when we depart!

Even as our lives have been mostly lived with 3,000 miles between us, there is a sisterhood that picks up where last we left off, & a deep love & respect for who we each are in the world & the way in which we try to be in it unapologetically.

It is Spring, almost Easter, not long after the equinox. Seems your birthday is perfectly placed just now, nearer to the top of the new season, & so full of the budding blossoms of Spring. I wish you the happiest of happy days my sweet friend.

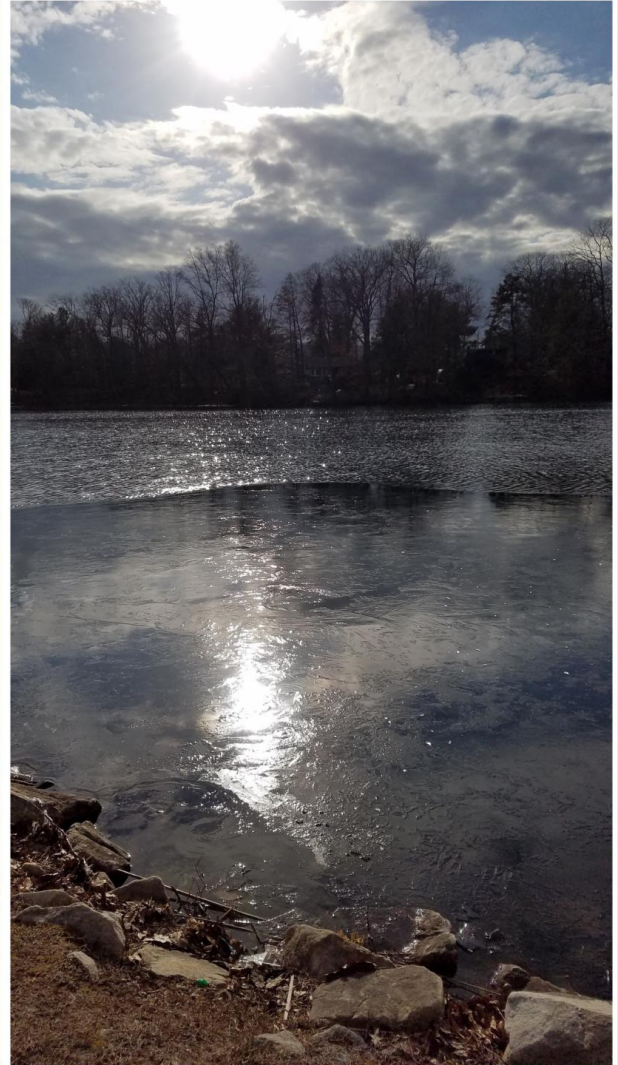
I love you muchly!

~vi









Diana Winston (from Los Angeles)

Hi Luv,

I was looking through photos and couldn't find digital ones before 2004. It reminded me that we met in 1996(ish) when we were mere children. Some highlights that pop to mind...

I remember early on hiking in the dark along the Yuba River, convinced we'd never find our site, and waking up the next morning in the magical clearing. We lived so wildly for those days on the shiny river. I remember sunning for hours, naked on the stones, bodies half in the water, and hearing your WHOLE story and thinking how much I would love you.

I remember our endless discussions that traversed political/spiritual/artistic lands late into the night at 848, often with Uncle Keefie. There never seemed to be an end to the topics we could groove on and your brilliant, connective mind continues to inspire me.

I remember you as "medic" at the WTO protests in 1999. And sitting with your sobbing having witnessed the trauma -- your compassionate heart broken wide open for this injustice and the injustice of it all.

I remember countless conversations of love and desire, and Buddhism, and spirituality, and social justice and protest, and cults and healing, and technology, and liberation. And then the later years of the child-rearing conversations. How we still and always love to try to make sense of this thing called parenting.

I so hate that we didn't get to raise our kids in proximity. Jaren and Mira 6 months apart! Grrrrr. Yet, I so loved dropping in on you in Berkeley and getting to be part of Leda's life for days here and there, despite distance.

I have cheerleaded from afar as you navigate the cancer journey. All of you -- including your profound brilliance, courage, strength, questioning mind and compassionate heart -- have been brought to bear in this crazy time. You have stepped to the plate with so much grace it makes my heart break.

All I can say, dear one, is that I am so grateful to have walked these last 25 years with you, near and far. You are my sister forever and I wish you an incredibly happy birthday.

Love always,
Diana



2004



2007 ~ 2006

Kristin & Bess (from rural New Mexico!)

Dearest Leda,

I/we are so grateful to have the opportunity to reflect on what an amazing human you are, in anticipation of your 50th birthday. You have inspired me in so many different ways in the 20+ years I've known you from being my instructor at CompassPoint, to your essential partnership and mentoring in the early days of Green For All over endless cups of Samovar Chai, to first hearing about Andy and your budding love, to moving fully into the friend category and singing prayers into your belly when you were pregnant with Jaren. And more recently it has been such a delight witnessing our families fall in love with each other, and to notice how deeply I/we feel we would and will do anything in our power to support you, Andy, Jaren and Raina.

You have such a bright and clear light, Leda. It radiates with a groundedness and beauty that is so uniquely you. Wherever you shine that light is blessed by it, and we are both so lucky to be blessed with your friendship. Your journey over the last few years has amplified your light, equal parts tender and fierce, soft and strong. It has further revealed your will, your resilience and your love again and again and again.

We wish we could be with you in person to mark this half-century moment, but know that we will find you through all the tendrils of connection between us and raise a toast to your life and health. Thank you for being part of our lives, Leda. We love love love you.

xoxo

Kristin & Bess







Liza (from Catskill, NY)

My Dear Super Leda,

What birthday tribute will do

To be grateful for decades of loving and learning from you?

Joyful agitator, strident thinker, and a friend's blessed balm

Brilliant as trainer, techie, writer, a dancer, a mom

So many gems of your wisdom imparted on walks

So many perfect moments filling my memory box

(Like your fan club of women laughing to tears

when you fem-hijacked the mic at bioneers)

Your mix of loving drive and gentleness is inspiration

You bear it inward and outward to create transformation

(Like mobilizing shutdowns of financial district streets

or going to learn about peace from the Middle East)

So weird to be here, now the age of our mentors

Accepting and growing and tending our centers

May this birthday mark the start of an awesomely good year

As you feel adoration from all who hold you so dear.

(Tune to be figured out. Maybe we can make a musical :)

I adore you and celebrate you and thank you,

Liza



Patrick R (from Oakland, CA)

Leda! Happy birthday. Five decades of Leda. What a worthy cause for celebration! I feel so fortunate to have gotten to spend the last two of them with you. Right from the beginning when you appeared in my life amidst the frenzy of anti-war mobilization, you have been an angel of purpose and champion for joyous uplift. It has been beautiful to witness the evolution of your amazing family and an honor to be part of the broader community that adores and supports you. These last few years have been quite a journey and your clarity and courage about transitions of all sorts has been an inspiration. Keep the faith. Bring the joy and carry on living the revolution.

Big love forever!

Your friend and comrade

Patrick



Doing it everyday.

Tate Hausman (from Brooklyn)

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast."

Leda was the first person to teach me that. Among many, many other things.

We may have lost regular contact over the years, but her mentorship has given me a lifetime of lessons. I consider myself lucky to have crossed her path so early in my own.

Happy big day!!

Shayna Englin (from Lake Arrowhead, CA)

Leda Leda Leda,

Where to start in describing the joy, intellect, and straight up inspiration the privilege of knowing you all these years has added to my life? Reflecting back on our wild and so, so strange times together in DC is an exercise in wonder.

Remember when we were rebuilding the AAJ's massive website infrastructure, from scratch, literally page by page? I just checked my email filters I just stopped getting automatic notifications from that thing like two years ago! A bonkers project that seemed nearly impossible, and certainly impossibly complex, that you tackled with grace, brains, and your signature no nonsense braininess.

I learned so much from you, then and in the many years since.

Writing this I'm remembering you recounting your very first date with Andy! How impressed you were with his kindness, expansive view of the world, and the way he felt like home, from the very outset. You have always been so tuned in and aware of the rhythms and harmonies of everyone around you, able to see us all for who we are our best and most evolved selves. The memory of you tuning into and harmonizing with Andy in those early days is so lovely, especially as you live and learn together through these wild and trying times.

Whether we've been close enough to hug and sync up daily, or far enough that the cadence of our friendship is slower with more distance, I'm grateful for every moment I've been blessed to call you my friend. I'm grateful for who you are in this world, and every second you're in it.

So happy birthday, dear one. It's a thrill to celebrate you, and your next lap around the sun.

XOXO,
Shayna

Jason Mogus (from Salt Spring Island)

Leda. Remembering all the times that you showed up at Hollyhock with so much positivity and creative energy and just overall awesomeness. Remembering also the time you also showed up in a 50 foot bus with babies and parents in tow! It meant a lot to have someone like you be so committed to that community in those early days. I think about you lots. Life hasn't been easy on some of us especially these past few years and yet we find within us the capacity to keep going, keep our hearts open, and keep finding the joy in the simple things.

So much love to you and your amazing family! Happy birthday!

Laura Saponara (from Richmond)

Leda,

Getting to know you in the past few years has been glorious. A HIGHLIGHT OF MY LIFE TO DATE. No joke, baby cakes! I love the way your mind works. I love the way your heart works. You are a truly special and rare human who has in turn conceived truly special and rare humans. It's a joy to be part of your team. I realize my part changes as seasons change. I do love you and yours. I'm grateful for the clarity, focus and strength you transmit.

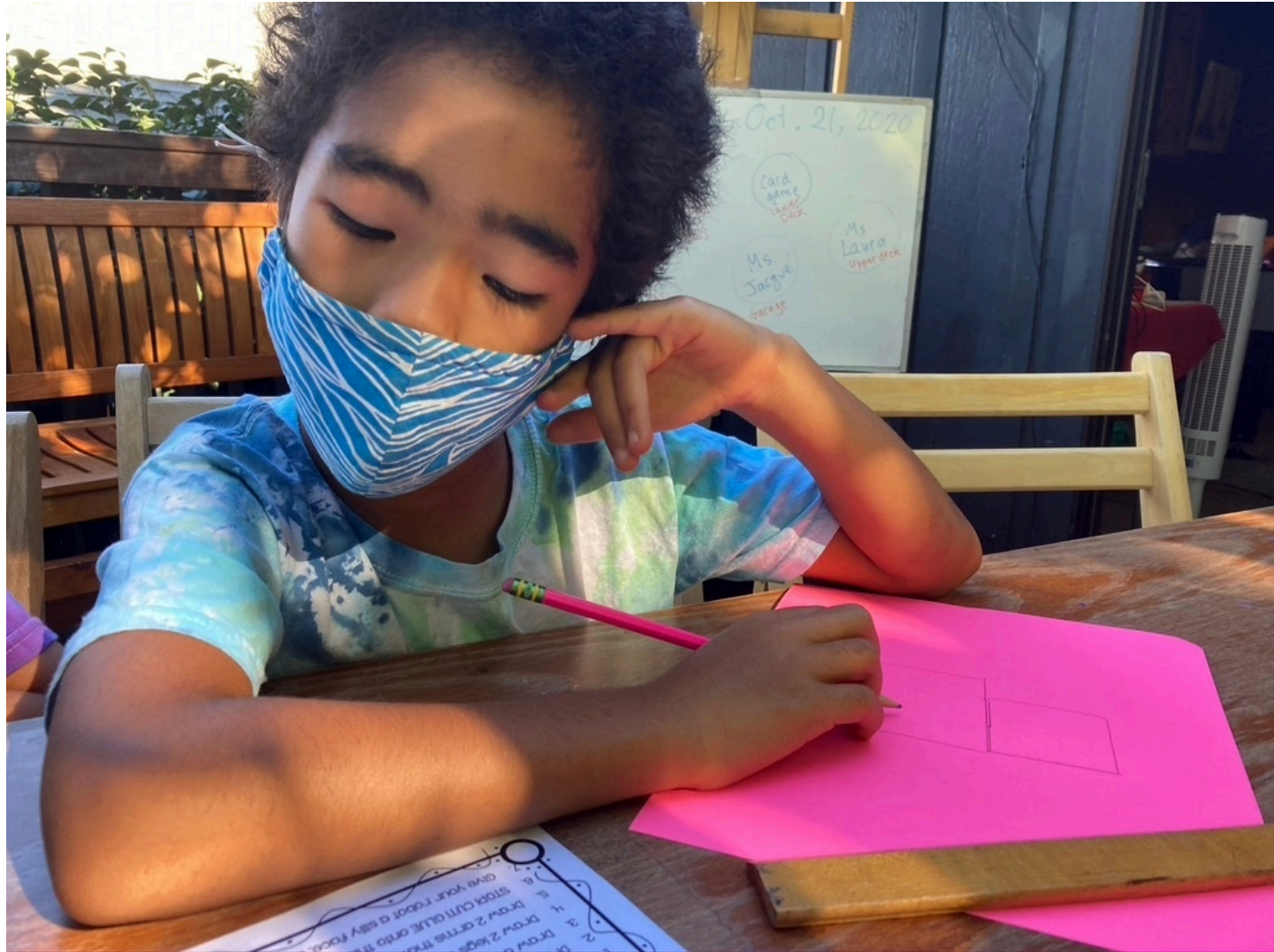
XO Laura



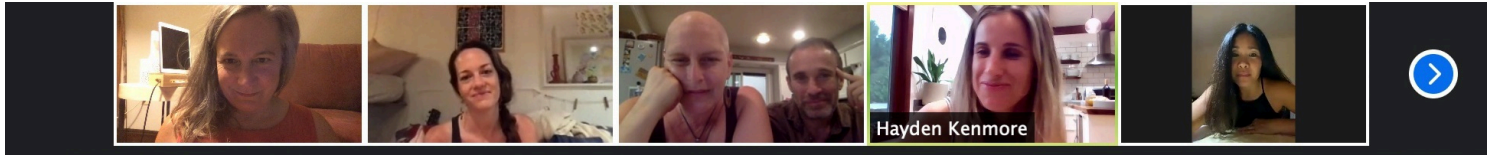
I love this photo! Here you posed for Lucia when we were in Russian River. Your eyes are a window into your spirit - stunning and generous.



Russian River, early pandemic, 2020.



I loved the Deck School you and Shannon created and will always be grateful.



Above Shay, there's something I really like about this mini image of you and Andy. Leadership in motion, via Zoom.



Jaren's bday at your house. 9th? So much love in your kitchen that day.



I admit I barely remember this, but so delicious to behold. ~ Love you very much, Leda. Let's take a new photo so we can be in the present together.

Judith Ansara (from Boulder)

Dearest Leda,

Well you've made it to this next milestone with all the grace and grit, wisdom, wit and love that is the essence of who you are. I have loved you since we first met and have been deeply touched and inspired by how you have walked your cancer journey along with the miasma of Mothering and COVID and writing brilliant contributions that teach and inspire. As you start your fifty first walk around the sun, I want you to know that how ever many more cycles you have - and we have with you in your beautiful body - that you and your life are sacred treasures.

I see you with your sword of truth wielding it as a powerful and artful dance. I bear witness to your joy, your grief, your fear, your love, and the many gifts of your hard earned wisdom.

I see you with Andy and Jared and Raina and the wonderful family dog, and I pray with all my heart that you be the person who beats the odds. And in terms of how full and loving your life has been and what a trail of beauty you have already spread in this great walkabout of life, you are a star. Keep shining dear one. Here's to a real hug soon!

Judith



The Warrior Priestess's Dance

Rachel Heron (from Oakland, CA)

Once the waves crashed over you, and tossed you, and thrashed you against rocks, trees, a black hole, a nightmare. It was like that for a while. And then, one day, or over maybe many days (hard to know about time in that altered space where obliteration feels imminent)... it ended.

The water was still there, and you in it. There was no more tumult, just a clear and cool space in which to float and swim and dive and surf. Even the salt was less bitter on your tongue, and when those bigger waves came by you knew how to take a deep breath, duck your head, and plunge into that momentary churning.

I see you and know some of you, and I also know that there's a mysterious force in you that I absolutely don't know. This is what we talk about. All the mysteries.

Many years of deep dives and deep dances.
I'm so honored to be IN IT with you dear Leda.







Angela Bausch (from Sebastopol, CA)

Dear Leda,

Oh happy birthday number 50! (So many of us turning 50 this year...)

At this 13th month of pandemic, I am not feeling as bright and shiny as I sometimes do. So I accept what I can do in this moment as I lay exhausted in my bed the night before we gather to celebrate you.

I remember coming to your little apartment on a hill in San Fran and having singing rehearsal and maybe talking about relationships and finding partnership (or dating?)(probably just dating). I remember hearing you talk about taking long long walks all around San Francisco. 848 and performances and maybe overhearing you talking about politics with others, which I never understood. Jump to rockridge. I may get the order wrong but... I remember that place having a piano i think and I remember many bubbly conversations with you there including the story about meeting Andy and a baby "in the yard". Blindfolded introduction after email dialogues and next thing I know the two of you are cuddling across the table at Bill and Rays when Steven lived underneath them. I remember hearing you two had "craft night" and I was impressed. Then there were babies and more houses and toddlers and it s a blur honestly. I am so happy you did find your partner and have your children. Isn't it wild? I think we may not be 20 anymore. It feels different. How long is this thing supposed to be anyway? Eating olives and having cocktails with you and ray at some fancy place in north berkeley for one of your birthdays. Always always nice to get to spend time with you. I love our conversations. House by cafe colucci. Cancer diagnosis. Reading some of the stack of 5 books about fighting cancer in the office while sitting on a very comfy chair. Feeling surprised. Seeing you dive into that journey and mostly being far away for it (living far/raising kids). Then pandemic which brought even more distance. But still ray and you and I snuck out to a picnic table behind Red Sea and got to catch up and you brought jewelry (it s so fun when you bring Jewelry) and that was my birthday. I hope to get to see you more as it feels safe and I still want to go to some Broadway shows and sing more with you and I look forward to reading what you write and I think you have some fundamental good ideas for how the world could work and I hope things coordinate to support you to have the energy and focus to bring your vision into some form that others can see. But no pressure and how can it be fun and oh ya that cafe idea from that leadership class...



Riki Bloom (from San Francisco)

Leda-

These photos not only reflect the pure joy you bring to heavy lifting, but the way you bring your playful, embodied intelligence into everything you do! Your power and willingness to share vulnerability through these challenging years with cancer has transcended time, space and cellular intelligence. Rock on Leda, may your birthday continue to surge you, with your wonderful life force across all ordinary and extraordinary limits!



Laughing at your own badassery! ~ I couldn't love you more!

Elanne Kresser (from Wasatch Mountains, Utah)

Leda, lovely, luscious, light, lucid, legit, lovable. I am so happy to be celebrating 50 orbits of the sun with you. Remembering meeting you in the City Aikido dojo changing room and somehow we knew each other. Familiar, kind, thoughtful you seemed to me. Still you seem all of those and more. A black belt for sure. So many years later I'm blessed to call you my dear friend -- someone I admire and enjoy. A mama I resonate with. That familiar ease of kin.

I wish I could pop over for a cup of coffee. I imagine you in your beautiful home bordering Tilden and feel so happy in that place. I wish we could go for lunch. I wish we could hash out important things. Take a nap, sit in the sun, walk the dogs. Praise to the stars that guided our paths to cross.

Come see me. Come meet these mountains. The cranes who are my neighbors and the aspen and spruce too.

So much love,
Elanne



Hello from winter! xoxoxo.

Debby, Dan, Meirav & Gavi (from Oakland)

Dearest Leda,

You are a force of honesty and good will. We adore your persistent fire for justice, for expressing love, for song, for telling it like it is, for sharing your unique perspective in the moment you feel it, for the quiet and the loud moments, for tuning inward and bounding outward.

May we always be close in our hearts.

Love,

Debby, Dan, Meirav & Gavi







Carol Swann (from Albany)

Dear Leda on your 50th Birthday!!

I witness you as the radiant spirit that moves and gets moved by the compelling forces that have engaged you.

Your courage and clarity have been a leading light in such a young woman who knew what side to be on to use your heart, soul and intellectual genius to fight on the right side of social justice.

I remember Keith and I meeting up with you in Israel. I knew you were doing some heavy duty research and yet I mostly remember your bouncing black curls and your full out laugh.

I hear your voice singing the songs I love, and I know you know why you sing them and what meaning they have as the resonance of the sounds reach into my cells.

I felt the joy and deep bonding with Andy as you both came into each others lives and community.

I see your pregnant body full with the grown Jaren ready to enter the world and in the glow of the love and the unknown to come. And I am moved.

I love the wildness & play you bring into your family as you come into proud motherhood and struggles.

And as I witness this profound journey of living with cancer, as always you become a Voice that articulates for all of us, what wants to be known with such eloquence, I often find myself in tears.

And so you are here so fully, so beautifully present with all of who you are and Jaren, Raina, Andy and your beloved community to celebrate you! I send you tons of love Leda for many more years to come... may it be so.

Carol Swann

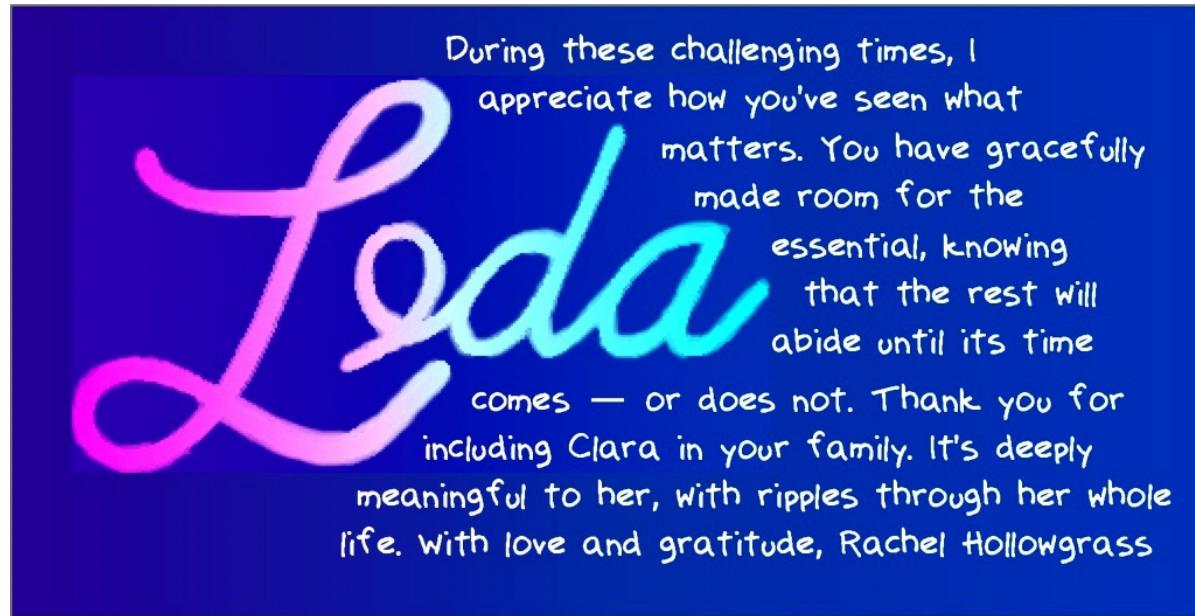
Leigh Hollowgrass (from your old Dana St. upstairs flat)

Sending dear Leda some super love on her birthday- feeling full and happy with thoughts and images of you, being your exuberant, gracious, warm and sometimes pensive self.

You've accomplished so much in this past decade: discovering and maintaining a deeply committed relationship with Andy, creating, birthing and parenting two amazing children, finding and making a home in the hills, homeschooling, and facing the challenges of your cancer diagnosis- getting through tests, surgeries, drugs, and physician visits with commitment and compassion for yourself and your family, paving yours and their path through that experience carefully, consciously and authentically. May your life continue to nurture you deeply as you nurture those around you. I am lucky to watch you in awe and love. Leigh



Rachel Hollowgrass (from Oakland CA)



Clara Hollowgrass (from Oregon)

Leda,

Your presence in my life has always come at the most pivotal times. The glow you brought to Dana St., both in the creation of your wonderful family and in your blessed individuality. To me you've been an aunty, an 'out-of-home mama', and the more I grow, the more it shifts to 'friends'. You have a light and a force that makes you magnetic and I'm sure this is why you can hold such a place in so many of our hearts.

Here's to you, on your 50th Birthday. I wish for you to celebrate the little things we would normally take for granted, lean into expansion of bodily ability, I hope you feel our hearts reaching out to yours on your special day.

Xoxo,

Clara



Leda and Raina on a New Year's Day hike, 2019

Rachel Levi (from Oakland)



Dearest Leda,

May the love and connection that you have and have created in your life wash over and through you as a most beautiful, gentle wave from the ocean. May it continue to bring wellness, well being and joy.

Let The Beauty We Love Be What We Do

Today, like every other day,

we wake up empty and frightened.

Don't open the door to the study and begin reading.

Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.

There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

From Rumi: The Book of Love: Poems of Ecstasy and Longing, by Jalal al-Din Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks.

Happy Birthday

With love and light,

Rachel (Ken and Alana)

Shari Krell & Bonnie Kimmel (from Walnut Creek)

Dear Leda,

We were bleary eyed first time parents, and somehow the universe blessed us by making our worlds connect. Young children, so many firsts, sharing our hearts and our vulnerabilities. Time and tunnel then separated us but those early years are our foundation and bond.

We admire so many things about you; your activism on a family, community and global level; your sharp insight and incredible way with words; your ability to bring people together.

We are inspired by so many things about you; your strength and innately joyful spirit, your ability to sit with uncertainty; and your openness and willingness to share yourself with others.

Happy, happy birthday. Fifty is the biggest, most lovely number yet. May you grow to be fifty more and may we share many memories along the way.

All love,
Shari and Bonnie



Lisa Griffin (from San Diego CA)

Sweet sister-friend, I am imagining you in your mountaintop home, looking out over the trees and hills, listening to birds and your children and feeling the wind on your skin. I remember you in our 20s, living at 1308 and dancing and jamming together there. I remember you on a MUNI bus ride once in that era, sitting together and talking with you, this kindred spirit. Then, years later, I remet you in Oakland, when our baby sons shared Shari's care in your house, and then in forming our co-op. So many floods of memories and moments rush to the surface: camping, backyard naked children eating snacks in the sun, music and movement and fort building and so so so much laughter and many tears. And so much love and fulfillment in knowing you and in building a web of care for our children and ourselves. Though we aren't in such close touch these days, I think of you and love you fully and consider your family our family. I send you birthday wishes and dreams full of health and sunshine and love and laughter in movement, like so many cycles of how I know you so far. So much love to you,

Lisa, Koichi, Kane, and Ando



Co-op Camping



Reading with Koichi



Arden wood Farms Trip



Jokers on the porch



Jokers fun ~ Redwood Regional Park story time

Emily Freedman (from Oakland, CA)

Happy 50th to my wise and brilliant friend! I am so thankful our boys brought us together. Talking about their trials and successes with you has been a source of comfort and understanding for nearly six years! One thing that I admire about you is you is your talent with the written word. Your style is so real and honest. The way you can spin sad experiences into hopeful reminders about how to live fully simply amaze me. Our ages are not that far apart, but to me, you are someone to look up to and learn from. Thank you so much for your consistent vote of confidence in me. Have the happiest birthday ever.

Love, Emily

Jennica Peterson (from Louisville, CO)

Dearest Leda (the American one and French one):

I'll never forget seeing you years ago from a distance, wrestling with your kiddos on the grass at Bateman Park. I'd never seen a mom so fully embrace her children in public, giving her whole self, physically and emotionally. It was just a tiny window into the incredible woman that you are. And that little moment of unrestrained love has inspired me for years.

From the start, you were like no other mom I'd met. When I was walking with Vida in the carrier for what seemed like hours (pictured), you were the one to stop me on the sidewalk, encourage me, and tell me this kind of love is worth it. You knew how to support and understand me in such a rare, wholehearted way.

That compassion of yours continues to be boundless. Sometimes when I think of you, I picture you in this wild California garden, in full spring bloom, with your gorgeous hair blooming, too. But the garden is really a metaphor for how you seem to live, indivisible from your fullest, most authentic self, so vibrant and beautiful with compassion, love, kindness, and natural wisdom. Even more amazing, you share this gorgeous garden with the world. How

lucky we all are just to even glimpse a life like yours!

As you've negotiated a new existence with cancer, you've continue to navigate life with so much humanity -- and to allow your dear ones to wander these wild paths with you. I am deeply grateful to you for the truths you've revealed about the twin engines of life and death and how they unite us all. You have this incredible way of allowing others to find meaning through your own journeys -- as only the very best writers can do. You've also used your power with words to help illuminate important problems through published essays. It's been the greatest honor to work with you on bits of those.

Oh Leda! I am so lucky to know you and am excited to see what you do next. Thank you so much for your friendship and love. Happy, happy birthday!

Love always,
Jennica



Early motherhood in Oakland, 2/2014. I couldn't find any shots of you and me together(!), but I thought you'd recognize me from this shot. We met at Colby Park around this time.

Laura Maestrelli (from Maui, Hawaii)

Dearest Leda,

The first thing I noticed about you when we met on our "cancer blind date" (god, can you imagine if there were an app for that??) was your eyes. Bright, shining, eyes. Full of life and light. We had both just begun our cancer adventures -- I was gripped with panic and anxiety most of the time back then -- but there you were with your beautiful, radiant eyes and your warm smile and your overall... well, Leda-ness. And for those two hours of our first chat, I didn't feel afraid or scared or alone. I felt like I was finally getting something from a disease that had only to wanted to take things away from me. Cancer had given me you.

Our friendship over these last four years has been one of the great surprises of my life. I didn't expect to get breast cancer at 39, and I certainly didn't expect to have my breast surgeon play platonic matchmaker -- and to be so damn good at it. I've often wondered what she saw in both of us that made her think we should meet? How could she have known that one day your kids would be leaving sweet notes for my kids in a mountain home that hadn't even been built yet? Life is so strange.

Leda, you are a gift to the world. You probably were before you had cancer, but I wasn't lucky enough to know you then. But I know you now. You bring LIGHT with you everywhere you go. In the ways you parent Jaren and Reina. In the ways you

support Andy. In the ways you fight for what is right. In the ways you speak your truth. In the ways you keep going, always moving forward when so many others would falter.

I have joked before that "WWLD" is the answer to most of my problems. What would Leda do? I'm not sure if you realize how much you give to the people in your universe just by being you.

Thank you for being my sounding board for ADHD parenting and school reopening advocacy. Thank you for understanding *exactly* what I mean when I say I don't recognize my body anymore. Thank you for introducing my family to Wow in the World. Thank you for letting me go with you to meet Dr. Huang that first time. Thank you for leaving a wisp of your hair in the mountains for me to find weeks later. Thank you for writing and for sharing your writing with all of us. Thank you for being the most badass 50-year-old mama I know. And thank you thank you thank you for being my friend.

With love and endless admiration --
Laura



Fe Coffers (from Brasil!)

Dear Leda,

I met you at this gathering where there were lots of people, with babies. I remember you playing the guitar; it was so beautiful and I felt so connected with you. I remember both of us feeling like we had nothing to do there, but we were there having a heart to heart connection.

You were there with me for a very significant life transition in a very generous and open way. We barely knew each other, but you offered me your home - to stay, regroup, and care for myself.

You have always been a big source of power and unconditional love for me. Know that when I look at this tree, it represents so much to me, of your essence. I can't thank you enough.

I honor you for an amazing completion of 50 years my dear Leda Araucaria!

Beijos,

Fe



Janice and Nadav (from Vermont)

From the moment Andy brought you into our lives, we've been family. We've shared adventures and sojourns together, separated by long stretches of time. And each time we come back together it's as if no time has passed.

We see you as the momma bear, fiercely protecting her cubs. We see you as the social justice warrior, seeking equity and opportunity for everyone. There is a dynamic tension between these drives, and you ride that big wave SO gracefully.



In Humboldt State Forest 2010



Trinity River Northern California 2010 ~ Vermont State Park 2011

Beth Kaufman (from New York)

Dearest Leda,

I celebrate this birthday along with you and everyone who loves you in this world, with full heart, full spirit and a full embrace! You awe me. You inspire me. You elevate me in so many ways! Our connection over these last number of years holds such a unique place in my heart. With the distance and only a handful of grand visits, between the business and drama of life... time spent with you over the years is always a supreme joy. I cherish your friendship as any long-held bond in my life. That one-on-one weekend, only just a few years ago... (really? Is it actually years?). How fun was that?? What a gift of presence! I am ever touched to see the transformational love and fulfillment that you've brought to our dear Andy! You are a gift to so many and I raise my glass to you, beautiful lady at 50!

I want to share a poem that I wrote this year (the first creative writing I've done in decades!), taking a cue from the work of J. Ruth Gendler's *BOOK OF QUALITIES*. It's called "INSPIRATION", and I hope you like it! Interestingly, I circled back to her writing months later and reread Ms Gendler's take on "JOY". I'm looking hugely forward to sharing that one with you when we next speak...

Meanwhile,

I am officially dedicating this one, mine, to you!

INSPIRATION

Inspiration feels the pulse of the dance floor. She doesn't wait for Courage to ask her to dance. She's no wall flower after all. The music pulls her up onto her feet and she dances to a rhythm all her own. Compassion and Expectation are out center, moving to the down-beat in lockstep with each other. Inspiration can't be bothered.

She gyrates to the more elusive off-beat. Tuned to the poetic twists and turns in the lyric. A cadence that suggests something more surprising, more challenging.

Inspiration doesn't care if anyone is watching. She dances alone but with abandon, all sweat and instinct and sensual curves.

(Envy wishes she had Inspiration's stamina and resolves to cut the carbs and sugar and go organic tomorrow.)

Inspiration goes home with Joy. They lock eyes across the room and she doesn't care who sees them leave together.

That night they make passionate love and break a lamp in the frenzy. It's easily replaced.

Inspiration wakes up to the smell of rich coffee and banging pots. Joy is making her a grand breakfast with whatever she can find in the fridge.

And the day ahead lures them both with open arms.

Dedicated to Leda Dederich, a woman of grace, power, joy and wisdom. Ever radiating with so much inspiration...



Jill (from Seattle, WA)

My dear Leda,

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!! What a blessing to honor you on this special day!

We never know the twists and turns our life may take. Yet despite life's ups and downs, your tenacious love and fortitude is breathtaking — your own innate powerful medicine that has brought you to this precious moment! You are remarkable! You have nurtured a beautiful blossoming loving family, fiercely contributed to the well-being of your community, navigated your political outrage (lol!), and still manage to passionately dream big with your feet gently caressing the ground.

Happy 50th Birthday, dear sister. I'm touched by your courageous life and celebrate the exquisite blessings you share with your beloved family and community. I look forward to being with you again soon!

All my love,

Jill



May your song of creation fill your heart with peace.

Cliff and Cristi (from Planet Earth)

Dear Leda love...

With strength, love, devotion and great spirit, you magnificently celebrate Life.

Through the years we have been connected, I have come to be inspired by your deep motherly love.

In your union with Andy, there is a soulful bond from many lives shared.

You have created two very special, powerful, amazing people.

Jaren Saul & Raina Joy are incredible, with their own unique wonderful presence.

What outstanding role models you and Andy are to bless this world,
growing beings of such bright shining light. May they enlighten our planet!

Cristi and I send you love, light and a universe of blessings.

Big Hugs across the miles... May you always shine the light of you... "Leda Love"

Wishing you a Happy, Happeee, Happeeeee Birth Day Every Day

Half a decade of wonder and magic! Celebrate and N—JOY Life always ;}

Love from Uncl Cliffy & Antie Cristi

As we celebrate festive days at your beautiful home in the hills.

We love you Leda













Kelly, Roger and Allie (from Charlotte)

Dear Leda,

When we think of you – so many powerful words come to mind... mother, partner, warrior, Devi, fighter, mama bear, courageous, healer, teacher, author, and sooooo many more. We are constantly in awe of the way you, Andy, and the kids have held each other and grown in love during a time that would break so many other families. Your ability to so eloquently put into writing your ups and downs, your struggles, and your journey have inspired us and so many others. We love you and we can't wait to spend more time with you and the fam. Happy, happy birthday to you!!! We are so thrilled and thank God that we get to celebrate your 50th!!!

Love,
Kelly & Roger

Leda – you are such a wonderful, intelligent, caring, talented, giving, beautiful individual. I am in such admiration of your strength, your poise, and your positivity. You have truly inspired me to grow as a person and enhance my own being.

I remember all those years ago when we rented the Stone House, and we spoke at length about my time in school, my future, my passions (we also did that fun mini-workout together to help get good juices flowing!). I am so appreciative of the times we have connected and the knowledge you have imparted with me. I have learned so much from you about how to be a strong, courageous individual. Happy birthday!! I can't wait to spend more time with you, Andy, and the kids. I love you all!

Love,
Allie





Jaren (from Berkeley)

You're the best Mom ever!

- You give **awesome** hugs!
- You work day and night to make our lives **better** and more meaningful!
For example, you were on a conference call almost every single night trying to get in-person school back on for Raina.
- You **truly** care about our education even though we're sometimes a bit annoying.
- You **butter** my toast much better than I can!
You don't make dents in the toast when you butter it.
- You have an **amazing** sense of humor and have a highly infectious laugh!
*Whenever you laugh, I start laughing too...
except when you're laughing at me, and even then, I sometimes do anyway!*
- You're not the kind of person who sticks to their opinion when they know it's wrong (unlike me, who does!)
*Example: ComCom. At first, you didn't really want a dog, but then once we actually got one, you changed your mind. Now, you are a **huge** ComCom fan.*
- When it comes to school, you're not afraid to change things even when you're not sure if it will make things better.
- When it comes to making **decisions**, you often let me make them for myself.
Examples: going to Grandma's house, or choosing my breakfast.
- Whenever I need help, you're **always** there for me!
Examples: homework, or whenever I lose something (which I do a lot!)

I love you SO much!!!

Jaren

Raina

Mom! You've been A MOM for 11 years... you've been MY MOM for 8 years... you YOURSELF have been a PERSON for what, 20 years? 30? ... OH RIGHT 50!!!!!!

**I
LOVE
YOU
MOM!**

You're the best mom ever! WHY?

- 1. You are an amazing person! Unique!**
- 2. You TRULY care about me. That's special!**
- 3. I JUST LOVE YOU SO MUCH!!!!!!**



Andy

We fell in love at a distance
In our first embrace we were blindfolded
but I could feel and smell the rightness of it all

From the first strain we breathed and stayed close
listening to one another, realigning rhythms

Before we both knew Puce-Lapin forever
we chose to create a J together,
and then a Rai
whole, as a family, until Com creme de la creme

What a journey we've been on
the gnarly road of life
but together, we wrap our arms
around it all
with open heart, humility and ever deepening gratitude.

You are my partner, lover, my teacher and my friend

HALLELUJAH for 50 Years!
Looking forward to sharing more to come...

















The line up at your 50th



In the Center - doing the 50 year dance!



FromABirdie.com is a web service and art project that enables a group of people to write letters for a shared friend. Pairing modern technology with ancient habits, FromABirdie.com aims to help restore the disappearing tradition of letter writing: the intimacy, the introspection, the time taken to find the right word, the gradual awakening of that precious sense of connection with the other.

All letters are kept private, delivered slowly, and forever preserved in a physical book, thus encouraging users to write personal and meaningful messages.

This is FromABirdie volume 4438. It was printed at the Bridgeport National Bindery in Agawam, Massachusetts on July 9, 2021.