

In Memoriam

Erika Lea Holmes

February 14, 1970–August 2, 2025



Erika Lea Holmes, age 55, of Denver, Colorado, died on August 2, 2025, after a long and difficult struggle with declining health.

Trying to capture Erika's life in words is nearly impossible. She was a dear friend, mentor, and colleague whose presence left a permanent mark on the Colorado legal community and on everyone lucky enough to know her.

Erika poured her intelligence, humor, and deep compassion into both her relationships and her work. She was one of those rare people whose presence changed the air in the room—lighter, sharper, funnier, kinder. She reminded us constantly, sometimes with an admonishing edge, to be kind.

Her professional legacy is extraordinary. Erika began her legal career at the Denver District Court, where she served as both a law clerk and pro se case manager. During that time, she also worked with the Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel, assisting the trial division and inventory counsel.

She went on to hold leadership positions across the profession: co-chair of the Colorado and Denver Bar Associations' Professionalism Coordination Council, chair of the CBA's Ethics Committee, inaugural chair of the CBA's Modern Law Practice Initiative, past chair of the Colorado Women's Bar Association's Legal Services Committee, and an appointed member of the Colorado Supreme Court's Standing Committee on the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct.

Erika gave her time generously to access to justice initiatives, serving as a volunteer attorney for Colorado Legal Services' virtual

clinics, a contract attorney for Project Safe-guard, and a volunteer mediator with Metro Volunteer Lawyers. She also mentored and taught the next generation of lawyers through the Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program, Legal Entrepreneurs for Justice, and other programs.

She also cowrote and authored several articles in *Colorado Lawyer* on the modern law movement. From January 2020 to June 2021, she cohosted 18 episodes of the CBA's *Modern Law Revolution* podcast.

Closest to her heart, however, was Modern Law University, LLC—her brainchild and labor of love. She built it single-handedly to teach lawyers how to create practices that were modern, humane, and sustainable, including developing a “master's degree” course for Legal Entrepreneurs for Justice, Colorado's modern law incubator. Right up until her death, she was working to make sure Modern Law University would continue into the future.

Through her writing, teaching, mentoring, and podcasting, Erika challenged lawyers to reimagine the profession—not only as a way to serve clients, but also as a way to build lives and practices that were more just, more balanced, and more compassionate.

But to those of us lucky enough to call her a friend, her impact was even more intimate. We argued fiercely (as we often did), laughed until our sides hurt, and, in the last months of her life, shared heartbreak at the toll her health struggles were taking on her. She let me see her pain and her exhaustion, but also her stubborn spirit and her wicked sense of humor. Even as her body failed her, she never stopped being *herself*—brilliant, demanding, generous, and deeply human.

She loved riding bikes, staying fit, meeting clients in coffee shops, and mentoring attor-

neys just starting out. She thrived on hard conversations—about physics and spirituality, flat fees versus billable hours, the often-subconscious traumas behind bad behavior in our profession, and the tension between serving the underserved and planning responsibly for a sustainable retirement. Erika believed in friendship that told the truth, even when it stung, and in community that lifted each other up.

Erika is preceded in death by her father, Donald Soderholm, and leaves behind her mother, Nancy Soderholm; two sisters, Sheryl Soderholm Combee (Clay) and Kirsten Soderholm Lewis (Ladonna); nieces Christine Soderholm Siddall and Jordan Lewis; nephews Andrew Siddall, Jonathan Lewis, and Eric Combee; the Stokes cousins; as well as countless friends and colleagues who were changed by knowing her.

Erika's absence is profound, but so is her legacy: a profession reshaped by her unique vision for which she never stopped striving, and friendships deepened by her laughter, honesty, and care. We will miss her fiercely. In lieu of donations, please spread some joy and kindness in her honor.

—Submitted by Marie Drake

Karen S. Metzger

September 13, 1945–October 9, 2025



Judge Karen S. Metzger passed away on October 9, 2025, at home surrounded by family, after a six-year confrontation with lung cancer.

Judge Metzger was a woman of faith, firm conviction, and a strong voice, especially for the young and oppressed. She was proud to be the daughter of a successful

state attorney general in her father, John, and a decorated concert pianist and art conservationist in her mother, Betty. Notwithstanding all she accomplished professionally, Judge Metzger would say without hesitation that she was most proud of her children and their many accomplishments, that her family was always her central focus, and that they made her life most meaningful.

Judge Metzger was born September 13, 1945, on a farm near Broomfield, Colorado. She grew up enjoying both the farm and the city, riding her horse Pal at the farm and in the West Eastlake Range Riders. She, along with her mother, attended many political meetings and Democratic rallies and events with her father. While a student at Marycrest High School in Denver, she excelled academically, enthusiastically served as a cheerleader, and led the speech and debate team (placing second in the Colorado state tournament for extemporaneous public speaking her senior year). She graduated from Marycrest High School in 1963 as valedictorian.

Although Judge Metzger began her collegiate studies at Santa Clara University in California, her love for the Colorado mountains brought her home, where she graduated from Colorado College in 1967. While at Colorado College, she served as an officer on the debate team, was elected secretary-treasurer of her class, became active in the Young Democrats club, joined the Alpha Phi house of the Gamma Phi Beta sorority, and was elected president of the Associated Women Students Club. Following her college work, Judge Metzger attended and graduated from the University of Denver College of Law in 1970. While at DU, she served as one of two national student delegates to the American Bar Association House of Delegates and as an editor of the *Denver Law Journal*. Following graduation, she worked as a deputy state public defender, where she learned the ins and outs of trying criminal cases under the tutelage of Rollie Rogers. In 1971, at the encouragement of her mentor Judge Zita Weinshank, she applied for and was accepted into the two-year Master of Laws program at Harvard Law School, where she served as a clinical teaching fellow while continuing her studies.

Following graduation from Harvard Law, she accepted a position as an associate professor of law at the University of Utah College of Law, commuting weekly from Denver. After her tenure at the University of Utah, she practiced law in Denver until 1977, when she was appointed to the Denver County Court by Mayor William McNichols. She was only the second woman ever appointed to that court. Two years later, she was elevated to the Denver District Court by Governor Richard Lamm, who subsequently appointed her to the Colorado Court of Appeals in 1983. As with her initial appointment to the Denver County Court, she was only the second woman ever to be appointed to the Colorado Court of Appeals. Judge Metzger served on the court of appeals with distinction for nearly 20 years until her retirement in 2002, ultimately retiring as the vice chief of the court.

A prolific writer during her time on the court of appeals, Judge Metzger authored more than 400 opinions in cases ranging from civil law disputes to criminal law, and probate to juvenile law. Throughout her legal career, she endeavored to serve her clients and the litigants who came before her with justice, understanding, fairness, and unbiased consideration of the issues presented to her. Just as her father had done before her, she often focused her efforts to help children and the disadvantaged whose needs and voices were often overlooked.

Although actively involved with the demands of the judiciary, Judge Metzger retained her interest in education. She continued to teach law and ethics at DU law school, and for more than two decades taught legal practice courses at the University of Colorado School of Nursing as an adjunct professor. Judge Metzger received numerous honors for her legal acumen and contributions to the promotion of law, including being elected into the American Law Institute, and being awarded the St. Thomas More Award from the Colorado Catholic Lawyer's Guild.

Judge Metzger also served with many community organizations and boards, including the Colorado Catholic Lawyers Guild, the Board of Governors for both the Colorado and American

Bar Associations, the Colorado Women's Bar Association, the Board of Trustees of Marycrest High School, the faculty of the National Institute of Trial Advocacy, the Governor's Commission on Children and Families, the Colorado Judicial Institute, and the Catholic-Jewish Dialogue. In addition, she served as a merit badge counselor and Eagle Guide for Boy Scout Troop 62 in the 1990s, and was a member of Blessed Sacrament Church and later Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Denver.

Judge Metzger is survived by her husband of over 52 years, Roger Keithley; her three children, Livingston (Sharlene), Christopher (Rose), and Kathryn (Craig); her four wonderful, mischievous, superbly intelligent, scientifically curious, amazingly energetic, and beautiful grandchildren, Rajan, Saira, Cody, and Owen; her brother, Bill (Anne); and her dalmatian, Rukus. Her former dalmatians, Blue and Kelso, are waiting for her at the Rainbow Bridge. 

In Memoriam is a complimentary service of the CBA honoring the lives and work of recently deceased members. Please email submissions to Susie Klein at sklein@cobar.org. High-resolution photos are appreciated.