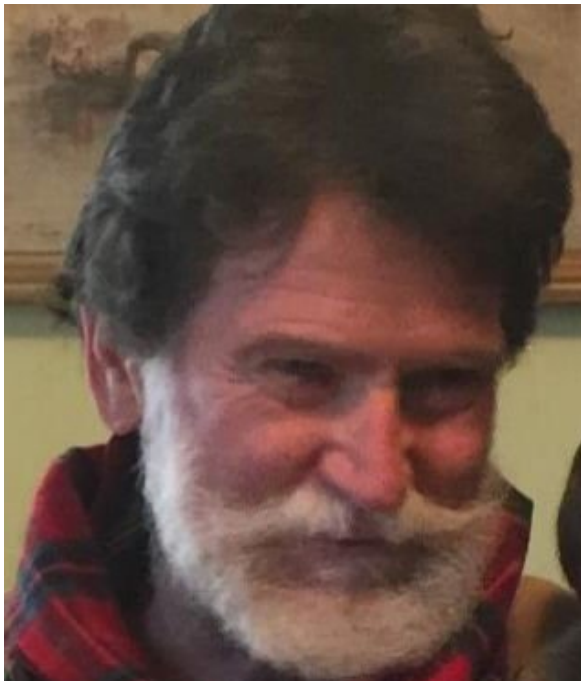


## Peter Hamilton Laurie

September 13, 2019



Peter Hamilton Laurie — poet, pianist, scholar — died at home in Gilsum on Sept. 13, 2019. Peter was born in Tacoma Park, Md., to Elizabeth Lee Hoyt and James Hamilton Laurie, March 20, 1943. He was a war baby who first met his father in 1945. Jim Laurie, a career army officer, hoped one of his sons — Peter, Stephen or Andrew (born in 1947 and '49) would enter military service. Stephen became a Marine and served in Vietnam.

Peter was destined for a life in the arts. Peter and his brothers went to Bethlehem Central High School in Delmar, N.Y. (near Albany). His talents in writing and piano, both classical and jazz, won him recognition in high school. He attended Brown University, where he was mentored by visiting poet John Berryman. Peter graduated cum laude in 1965 with a major in English expression and minors in classics and musical composition. At graduation Peter delivered the class poem — a eulogy for JFK's America, smashed by the greed and hubris of the Vietnam War.

Brown awarded Peter an Arnold Traveling Fellowship for 1965-66, allowing him to visit Italy and Greece and continue work on a new version of Homer's "Odyssey." He found a traveling companion in Johanna Muntz, a close friend from high school who shared his interests in music, language and history. Peter and Johanna were married in August 1965 and began what became a 54-year odyssey of their own, including a year (1967-68) together at the Center for Advanced Medieval Studies in Poitiers, France, studying romance languages, literature and music and following the footsteps of the troubadours.

Peter's formal studies concluded with a PhD in comparative literature from Brown in 1975. His thesis on Ezra Pound; "the Poet and the Mysteries: Pound's Eleusis" shed new light on Pound's paganism, inspiration for some of the greatest poetry written by the 20th century's most controversial poet.

Like Pound, Peter was a fiercely independent thinker who never shied away from controversy. He despised post-modernism and academic politics. His independence cost him a tenured position in academia, but he loved teaching and always found opportunities to share his vast knowledge and love of the classical arts. Whether as a Fulbright lecturer in American Letters at the University of Bologna, Italy, a visiting professor of American literature and culture at the University of Bilkent in Ankara, Turkey, a writing teacher at Santa Rosa Junior College, Keene State or Franklin Pierce, Peter made a lasting impression on faculty and students alike. He addressed writing symposiums in Europe and America, wrote articles in cultural journalism and published both original poems and translations of foreign language poets.

In 1986 Peter gave a five-lecture series on American classicism at Dartmouth College. Typical of the wandering scholars of old, Peter also worked in the building trades, built custom furniture, was an excellent cook and occasional chef and had gigs as a pianist and composer. Most recently, Peter sought to create a consortium of artists and scholars dedicated to reaffirming classical tradition across the arts — a Renewal Foundation. Peter lived in Cheshire County in East Sullivan, Keene and Dublin between 1982 and 1994 while his wife, Johanna, completed the Master of Arts program in dance movement therapy at Antioch University and his children attended Monadnock Waldorf School and High Mowing High School. He and Johanna returned to Keene in 2009 and, later, to Gilsum, as grandparents.

Always a spiffy dresser, Peter was frequently seen striding the streets of Keene or walking in Robin Hood Park with his dog Caesar.

Peter is survived by his wife Johanna; their two children, Evan and Fiona; five grandchildren, Tristen, Aiden, Anna, David and Cameron Laurie; his brother Andrew; half siblings Christopher and Keith Laurie and Pamela Donahoo; and several nieces and nephews. In accordance with Peter's wishes, no public memorial service is planned. Condolences may be sent to Johanna Laurie at 74 South Lincoln St., Keene 03431.

Many thanks to all the people at Dartmouth-Hitchcock, Cheshire Medical Center, and Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services who supported Peter and his family during his illness and passing.