

Philip Shannon Donihoo

September 7th, 1957—January 20th, 2025

Philip “Shannon” Donihoo, age 67, born in Dallas, Texas, rose up to trek across eternal wintery beauty beside his departed loved ones, undoubtedly donning the rugged cold-weather garb that he relished wearing during his time on Earth. But let’s begin with Shannon’s life. As a young boy, Shannon and his older brother, Kevin (nearly three years his senior), enjoyed playing together (i.e., G.I. Joes, Major Matt Mason, Hot Wheels, WWII, Batman, Monopoly and Easy Money, and football) and listening to the Beatles with their beloved childhood friend, Marc. Shannon and Kevin, thrilled by matching Sting Ray bikes from Santa one Christmas, were later even more thrilled with the arrival of their baby sister, Elizabeth, whom they were reliably informed Santa had no part in. As older boys, they good-naturedly tortured their sister and her dolls, sometimes enlisting the assistance of their G.I. Joes. Elizabeth was both horrified and oddly excited to find her Barbies massacred, leaving a trail of fake blood, to boot. (Although it has taken some years, Elizabeth has forgiven her older brothers.) Jokes and laughter were eternally shared by Shannon and his siblings and lit the hearts of their mom and dad and loved ones.

By age 12, home was Sacramento, California, where Shannon was a master at bringing the inanimate to life. He made up voices for his Troll doll and Sleestak-looking alien figurines (for you “Land of the Lost” fans), giving them names such as Capo and Old Man, each with a distinctive personality. Shannon often spoke to Elizabeth in her doll’s voices, beckoning her not to leave them in the closet. His creative heart brought joy and a love for the bizarre to his family. A naturally gifted artist (following after his father and a talent shared by his brother), Shannon drew Native American tribal figures; self-created, original cartoon characters; and the mascot (eagle) for the El Camino High School paper. His comic characters captured the essence of his mom and brother and, of course, were used to further torture his sister. The “Baby Snatcher,” a nefarious character depicted with stubble and carrying a bag with a protruding small child’s leg or arm, was readily dispatched (starring Kevin) to pick up a “misbehaving” little sister. Shannon’s mother saw her son as the peacekeeper and likely favored him much to his siblings’ envy and confusion.

With hair down his back and often clad in overalls, Shannon was a natural fit for the Hippie community in Humboldt County, including Arcata, his mecca in northern California in the 70’s and early 80’s. (His son, Christian, is now a respectable hippie in his own right.) Shannon returned to Texas in the mid-80s, first living with his brother and mom in The Woodlands and ultimately landing in Edinburg, where he palled around with his sister, listening to the best music in his red Mazda Miata and inspiring her to pursue songwriting. It was there that Shannon’s dad showed him the ropes of the produce industry. Shannon became a dedicated, successful truck broker, and the bulk of his professional life was with Tommy Cowart and Ruben’s Truck Brokerage. Despite daily pain and discomfort in his final years, Shannon always performed his duties skillfully and with humor, as fellow members of his work community well know.

In 1987, Shannon was introduced to the love of his life, Martina “Tina” Cortez, by his fast friend and to-be brother-in-law, Juan. When Tina was a young girl, she had torn a page of a “Diamond is Forever” advertisement from a magazine. Staring back at her was a young beautiful hippie couple with their bell-bottom jeans—she with her platform shoes, and he with his chukka boots. From that moment on, Tina knew that this was the kind of guy that she liked. She didn’t realize it then that she would measure boys she met with that yardstick. Eleven years later, at the age of 22, Tina and Shannon met. He embodied the hippie spirit and gentle soul that she envisioned. Not only was he handsome, but he was kind and funny. He was so cool, she thought, with his easy way of talking and walking without hurry. From then on, they were friends, though that soon turned into something more. Tina lied to her mother when she asked how long Tina had known Shannon. Tina took a leap of faith: they married nine months after they met. Seven years into their marriage, their beautiful boy, Christian Skye Donihoo, was born. He delighted parents, grandparents, and many aunts, uncles, and cousins. The following years, their small family would enjoy vacations in the mountainous corridors to the West.

Shannon’s love and knowledge of music was evident to Tina and Christian. Shannon would often take on the role of D.J. for hours, playing one great tune after another. To Tina’s dismay, he would only play a song three-quarters of the way through because he was eager to share all of them with his family. Music was, for both his own family and his family of origin, a medium for loving each other and for all the things we struggle to say to one another. Shannon loved and admired great musicians like Pete Townshend, Bob Dylan, Peter Gabriel, George Harrison, and the long-haired rebel, Willie Nelson, who embodied Shannon’s own free-spirited ideals. If you were lucky enough to share time with Shannon, music was his landscape (as was the series “Yellowstone”) and he invited others to travel beside him. Tina and Christian had a front-row seat to Shannon’s heartfelt, beautiful expression of his soul through his poetic use of language, ranging from the cooky to intimate renderings of the lived human condition. He was astute and unconventionally discerning of others and always knew and valued what was real, refusing to give his attention to anything less than a soulful way of living. As Tina says, Shannon was the coolest.

Shannon showed Tina love every day through his loyalty, commitment, and hard work. Though he too was burdened with illness, often going to work despite his pain and fatigue, he cared for Tina when she was weary from her own illness. Shannon taught Tina, by example, to love unabashedly. For the rest of her days, Tina will live and love as he did—without fear and with an open heart.

“Where you invest your love, you invest your life.” ~ Mumford and Sons

His love of Hunter S. Thompson, Kurt Vonnegut, and other such subversive authors reveal Shannon’s unique philosophy of life, including a spiritual understanding of God and deep humility before his Maker. The self-named “gray-haired baby boy” imbued endless wit and levity into the space he dwelled. Having no fear of the existential, Shannon’s sense of humor was rich and alive and in turn enriched others’ lives. Although he was a traveler of the dark night of the soul, this too deepened his heart and care for all. Often, Shannon watched and listened rather than speaking, and helped teach others about life, particularly his son and the Reyes’ troupe of little ones. For his devoted wife, Tina, he slowed time down, allowing her to be in the moment with Shannon, who often opened up a new world, both playful and profoundly reverential.

Shannon is survived by his devoted, spirited, and endlessly loving wife Martina “Tina” Donihoo and their only son, Christian Skye Donihoo (“Skyeman”). He is also survived by his brother, Patrick Kevin Donihoo (“The Man Who Read Through Time, as dubbed in Shannon’s comical doodles) and his wife Ana L. (“Letty”) Chavarria; his sister, Elizabeth Anne Donihoo (Liz, Lizzy, Lizard, Lizard Breath); his nephew Conor Sean Donihoo; Christian’s partner Stevie Palacios and her father Sonny Palacios; brother-in-law David Cortez and his wife Rafaela; brother-in-law Juan Cortez and his former wife Caly and their children; Ronnie Cortez, his daughter Renee Reyes, her husband Steve, and their children; sister-in-law Rachel Gutierrez; sister-in-law Cindy Rodriguez and her children; sister-in-law Velma Lopez, her husband Adrian, and their children; as well as many beloved cousins on both sides.

Shannon was preceded in death by his mother, Lois Fern Utley; his dad, James Craig Donihoo; siblings Timothy Shane Donihoo and baby girl Donihoo who died at birth; grandparents, aunts, uncles, and a few cousins on both sides; mother-in-law Rachel Cortez, father-in-law Alfredo Cortez, brother-in-law Freddy Cortez; brother-in-law Pedro Rodriguez; sister-in-law Maria Elena Gutierrez; and his beloved pets, Wrinkles, Rebel, Zach, Joey, Becky, and his special little girl, Kaya. Shannon and Tina’s treasured first child “Bucky” (stuffed beaver) is currently M.I.A. Bucky’s sister, Becky, holds the fort down now.

