

Biography - The Life of Wensdy Whitehead

Wensdy Whitehead was born June 24, 1971, in Midland, Michigan. On May 7, 2023, at the age of 51, she died in hospice care from metastatic colon cancer in the loving care of family and her many origami friends.

She was cherished by her parents, George and Winnie Whitehead, who were blessed with a daughter later in life. Wensdy attended many academic and artistic enrichment classes, including guitar lessons and learning origami. Due to her academic success, she received a full scholarship to Cornell University where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science in 1993. She lived in the German House, a residence hall, where students spoke German instead of English. She studied in Germany, her junior year, attending the University of Hamburg. In 1994, she joined the Army to become a translator. She then moved to Massachusetts in 1995 to work as a software design engineer at VideoGuide, receiving two patents in 2002 and 2005 for Interactive Program Guides. She lived in many cities in Massachusetts, mostly in Somerville, and later in Medford.

Wensdy began folding at age four, two years before she ever heard the word "origami." Her mother started her off with a couple of traditional models, and by age nine she was off hunting for origami books to feed her creative appetite. After college, she became active in the origami community, becoming a regular at local origami groups and national conventions. These became the platform to showcase her own original pieces. Her folding sequences were both clever and accessible, with a knack for choosing interesting subject matter. Notable series include entire words and phrases created just through folding single sheets, and integrating heart shapes onto traditional models to give them new meaning. She had success exploiting the geometries of dollar bills, created a book on the subject: *Election Money Folds 2012*.

One of her "breakout" models was the sorting hat from the Harry Potter movie, everyone wanted to learn it at the convention. All that attention was very new to her; a bit stressful but she very much enjoyed it. She was socially awkward but very easy going and this made her very easy to work with and learn from.

She created a huge variety of models, simple models, complex models, one-piece models, modulars, dollar folds. She would fold from anything. She especially liked folding from recycled material. It was a fun challenge for her. Sometimes she would show up late to an origami gathering because she was up all-night designing.

She was well known for her collection of tiny little models; she could fold such intricate detail in very small models. One extraordinary model was a miniscule working model of a flapping bird.

Her designs have been on exhibit at the Peabody Essex Museum and other venues.

She had a fun sense of humor filled with folded puns. Outside of her origami accomplishments she was a smart, intellectual, and caring person.