

I'm Susan, sometimes called Zagime, and I have the honor and privilege of being Ikse's mom. You won't be surprised to know that being Ikse's mom has been a very educational experience, as well as thoroughly entertaining. I always told the kids I had them for the entertainment value. We had so many adventures, and I cherish the memories even as I am outraged that we won't be adding more.

For years, our arrangement was that the big birthday present was an expedition, though it wasn't necessarily right at birthday time. I pretended that these were gifts to Ikse, though of course they were really for me. I think Ikse was 9 when we camped overnight at Big Basin and watched a ring-tailed cat stroll across our campsite in the twilight. The next day we went on a steep 11-mile hike to admire beautiful waterfalls. To this day this is one of the longest days I have ever spent hiking, because although those 9-year-old legs kept going, they weren't very fast, and we were slowed by the need to greet and name every newt we encountered along the way. There were a lot of newts.

Another year it was horseback camping, and this was the occasion for one of my biggest parenting fails ever. After tucking my child in for the night, I was talking to our host, and mentioned that I was not entirely looking forward to riding 20 miles a day, but I hoped to piggyback on Ikse's enjoyment and use their enthusiasm to spark my own. I went to bed and found a forlorn daughter in floods of tears. Ikse had overheard, and was devastated to think that their enjoyment was bought at the price of any sacrifice on my part. After frantic backpedaling, we had a good trip overall, but it was a hard lesson in keeping my mouth shut! Ikse never gave up that aversion to having good things come at someone else's expense, though.

Another year brought Ikse's first backpacking trip, in northern Yosemite. We walked into a grove of aspens in the beauty of their fall color, and Ikse gasped "Lothlorien!"

Glimpses of other trips feature bears, rattlesnakes, moose, many rainbows, spectacular thunderstorms, a certain Scottish mountain you may have read about, and an unforgettable dinner on a ledge, talking about life and futures, and watching the sun set over the Hetch Hetchy reservoir. Then of course there's watching my chemo patient canoe partner outpaddle and outhike me, carrying the heaviest loads up the steepest trails on our last Boundary Waters trip. As always, Ikse was cheerful and patient, and did more than their share of every chore.

Yes, Ikse was amazing. They were brilliant and brave and beautiful, kind and emotionally intelligent, practical and creative, strong and loving. And yet it doesn't do Ikse justice if we don't admit that Ikse was also a mess. I say this with the greatest love and respect. But reading their words, we know that Ikse struggled with depression and anxiety, wrestled with anger and resentment and pride, fought every day to show up as their best self rather than give in to their inner toddler. Among the written memories that people sent in, Ikse's colleague Thais wrote that Ikse taught her that you can't wait until you're good at something to start doing it. I found Thais's words entirely relatable here – Ikse didn't wait to be good at being the kind of person they really wanted to be before starting to do the things they thought were right. And if anything, I find it even more inspiring that Ikse had those challenges and still made the world a better place, one day, one task, one conversation at a time. Loving family member, loyal friend, inspiring guide and educator, beloved daughter, I miss Ikse terribly, but I'll carry forward the many lessons I learned from them, and see them in every mushroom, every newt, every rainbow, and every sunset over the water.