

In Memory of Penne (Percy) Korth Peacock November 3, 1942 - June 30, 2026



Ambassador Penne Percy Korth Peacock, a true Southern belle of grace, intellect, warmth, and sparkling humor, passed away on June 30, 2026. The beloved daughter of LtCol James Shelley Percy, USAF, and Ann "Annie Ruth" Green Percy, she was a devoted mother, cherished friend, accomplished diplomat, and champion of American values, public diplomacy, and the arts. Proud of her Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas roots, Penne was a striking beauty whose elegant presence turned heads, yet behind the charm lay a razor-sharp mind and a brilliant sense of humor that quickly disarmed skeptics and proved any initial underestimation of her formidable capabilities wrong. She was as comfortable in blue jeans on the ranch as in pearls at black-tie events with heads of state. Whether hosting grand events or opening her home to friends and their children, Penne lived a life of genuine connection, unwavering family devotion, and joyful service that touched nations and

warmed every room she entered. A respected figure in Washington circles, she was known as a skilled power broker who built authentic relationships across political and social lines.

Born on November 3, 1942, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, Penne moved with her family to Waco, Texas, where she graduated from Waco High School in 1960. Inheriting her mother's poise and her father's civic drive, she attended the University of Texas at Austin and became active in Chi Omega sorority. While at UT, she was selected as the 1962 national Maid of Cotton. She took a year off from her studies to embark on an extensive global tour as a goodwill ambassador for the American cotton industry, traveling tens of thousands of miles and representing U.S. agriculture and textiles worldwide. This experience planted the early seeds of her diplomatic calling, blending her Southern charm with international engagement. She made her debut in Dallas and met Fritz-Alan Korth (a law student from Fort Worth) at UT. Deeply interested in politics from her college years, she interned for Senator John Tower (R-TX) and helped open an early office for George H.W. Bush's Senate campaign in Austin, forging a lifelong friendship with the Bush family.

After Fritz-Alan Korth's father, Fred Korth, served as U.S. Secretary of the Navy, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., where Fritz joined his father's recently established law practice. Penne engaged deeply in civic and cultural life there. She worked as a senior Washington associate and client liaison for Sotheby's trust and estate division, leveraging her Texas connections and love of the arts. Her talent for authentic relationships made her a central figure in Washington circles; her Kalorama Circle home, affectionately known as the "Korth Hilton," became a beloved gathering place where she graciously hosted friends, diplomats, and generations of young people with warmth and Southern hospitality. A close friend of George H.W. Bush, she was appointed co-chair (with Bobby Holt) of the 1989 American Bicentennial Presidential Inaugural - the first woman in that role in the administration. Under a tight timeline, she helped orchestrate memorable events celebrating the 200th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration.

President Bush appointed her as one of his first female ambassadors. Nominated on August 4, 1989, she served as U.S. Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Mauritius from late 1989 to 1992. As a non-career appointee during a time when women were gaining greater

influence in diplomacy and public service, she became a role model and inspiration for many. She effectively managed trade issues (sugar and textiles), the complex Diego Garcia base matters, and public diplomacy. She built strong cross-cultural ties in a diverse nation and supported health initiatives. Upon departure, Mauritius's Prime Minister hosted a rare farewell dinner in his home, praising her charm, intelligence, and impact.

In 1993, Penne co-founded Firestone and Korth Ltd., a Washington, D.C., firm specializing in corporate consulting and high-profile events for leaders worldwide. In 1997, President Bill Clinton appointed her (as the Republican member) to the bipartisan U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, where she served for years on strategy and modernization efforts. She maintained extensive board and advisory service with the Council of American Ambassadors, U.S.-Mauritius Business Council, Meridian International Center, Van Cliburn Foundation, Marjorie Merriweather Post Foundation, Chevy Chase Bank (14 years), as Vice Chairman of the Washington Round Table at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Diplomatic Advisory Board of the U.S. World War One Centennial Commission, and in emeritus roles and gala/event leadership with organizations such as the Washington Ballet, Hillwood Museum, National Symphony Orchestra, and White House Preservation Fund. In Texas, she contributed to the Harry Ransom Center Advisory Board at UT, Friends of the Governor's Mansion (as Development Chairman), Austin Council on Foreign Affairs, and the Lower Colorado River Authority (Vice Chairman, Central Basin Regional Council).

In 2002, Penne married Andrew Peacock (1939-2021), the prominent Australian Liberal Party leader, former cabinet minister, and Australian Ambassador to the United States. Their wedding was held in a church near the White House. They divided time between Australia (where she engaged in bilateral relations and advisory work) and Texas, later settling primarily in Austin and Fort Worth. Andrew passed away in 2021.

Penne was preceded in death by her parents; her first husband, Fritz-Alan Korth (d. 2011); her older sister, Brenda Percy Pardue; and her second husband, Andrew Peacock (d. 2021). She is survived by her sisters, Shelley Percy Clark (Jerry) of Birmingham, Alabama, and Jamie Percy Estes of Austin, Texas; her three children, Fritz-Alan "Chico" Korth Jr. (Wendy) of Austin, Maria Korth Kroger (Andrew) of London, and Colonel James Frederick Korth, USMCR (Janey) of Fort Worth; and her ten grandchildren, Isabella Percy Chieffalo, Alexander Korth Chieffalo, Henry Elliott Ames, George Oliver Ames, Heidi Eleanor Korth, Oliver Wolcott, Dixon Wolcott, Fritz-Alan Korth III, James Frederick Korth Jr., and Charles Walton Sansom Korth. To her grandchildren she was affectionately known as "Dodo," a playful nickname inspired by her time as Ambassador to Mauritius, the only island where the dodo bird was native. This loving moniker reflected her tender heart and the special joy she brought to family life.

Penne was deeply devoted to her family, especially her children, and loved a good party as much as quiet moments in the Texas and Virginia countryside. She moved through the world with natural elegance rooted in deep character, a talent for friendship, and unwavering service. Appointed by presidents from both parties, admired internationally, and loved by those fortunate to know her, she exemplified a Texas girl - proud of her Southern heritage - who became a global diplomat while remaining devoted to family, community, and the joy of bringing people together. Her story reflects the best of American public life - connections forged with warmth, impact delivered with intelligence and humor, and a legacy of grace that endures.

A private celebration of life will be held this fall.