

A Life Well and Generously Lived

Susan K. Weber – June 1941 – October 2014

She was born Susan Mae Keim in June of 1941, the last child and only girl of Mel and Ida Keim. She grew up a tomboy in the small Midwestern town of Urbana, Ohio. As a child she was well and thoroughly loved. She read on the porch swing; explored the natural world, (She never feared snakes or spiders as other little girls of her age had been taught to.); walked safely to and from school where she was a good and earnest student.

Susan's world began to change in what we now call "Middle School", but that she knew as "Junior High". Her gregarious personality began to emerge, as did her communication skills and social awareness. She became a cheerleader for the Urbana "Hill Climbers" and was, for the first time in her life, notably popular. The pattern continued and intensified in high school. She won a state-wide oration contest, travelled as a delegate to Girl's State, spent summers swimming in Muzzy's Lake, was the only "girl" in her high school Physics class and most of all began to think about and crave travel. She wanted to see the world. Pleasant and comfortable as it was, Urbana could not hold her.

Eventually her travels would take her to Europe, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Kenya, Turkey, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Japan, China, Singapore, New Zealand and the high arctic. She walked the Great Wall, marveled at the pyramids, felt the rain on her face in Paris, visited ancient markets in Istanbul and Jerusalem.

Her parents resolved that their three children would have the formal education they, (growing up in depression Indiana), had never had. Susan went off to Bowling Green State University. Most unusual for her time, she earned a double major in English and American Studies and went on to get both BA and BS degrees -- the later in Education which would be her life-long passion.

Along the way she met a philosophy student named Steve whom she worked into passible shape. They were married in June of 1965 and set off together on a life filled with love, laughter and public service.

Their joint adventure took them first to the University of Colorado where Susan taught in a Denver suburb; then to Elkhart, Indiana, where she taught in high school and coached the debate team; then to the University of Maine, (where Steve got his first faculty post and), where they were joined by sons Rick and Matt.

Susan was an extraordinary mother, building two fine young men, introducing them to public service, to an appreciation of others, to the arts.

After the University of Maine it was on to Fairfield, Connecticut where she earned her Master's degree and from which she did market research in New York City. While in Fairfield she served as a docent in a school wildlife appreciation program on the Mill Plain River.

Next stop: St. Cloud Minnesota where she taught speech part time at the university, worked in advertising and was president of the local "Wheels, Wings and Water" summer festival.

Then to Oswego, New York, again teaching speech at the university. By now she had become the university's "first lady" and worked side-by-side with Steve. Her social skills, her community involvement, her sense of, "We can make it better.", served the universities well.

Once again Susan was both a campus and a community leader. She served as president of "Arts and Culture of Oswego County". She worked as an advocate for Native Americans to have their culture and traditions better reflected in the public schools and worked with Native Americans to

develop a self-guided interpretive trail at the university's field station where visitors and especially school children could learn about native herbs and see them in their natural setting.

Then, after a brief stint in Albany, Susan and Steve moved to San Diego State University. Contrary to the typical experience she did not love San Diego – at least not at first. It was too big, too glitzy, too taken with itself. She would grind her teeth whenever someone said, “Welcome to paradise.”

Once again, she taught briefly at the university, but most of all she and Steve were a team serving, exhorting, encouraging a university capable of greatness. She became Board Chair of the San Diego County YWCA and worked tirelessly in its behalf. She founded and led a group of extraordinary women called “Bridges” – ambassadors for the university to the community at large. She worked with a student leadership group called “Aztec Pride” that welcomed visitors to official university events. Most-of-all she was there by Steve's side helping him serve the university and community – her social skills and human sensitivities making up for his own lacunae.

Susan and Steve retired together to their beloved Hancock Point on the shore of Frenchman Bay in Maine – in a sense, where they had started out. By now Susan had been diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis and had been told this might well be her last summer. In fact, she and Steve were to enjoy four summers by the Bay, summers full of flowers, eagles and laughing grandsons.

It is hard to sum up any human life, but if Susan's were to be summed one would have to list: gregarious, adventurous, open to people and to the world, patron of the arts, intelligent, generous, wise, strong, and unflappable – all wrapped up in a great sense of humor.

She had a laugh that could light up a room -- and your heart.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers you consider a gift in Susan's name to the Susan K. Weber Bridges Scholarship Endowment Fund at San Diego State University or to the Frenchman Bay Conservancy in Hancock, Maine.