

Susan Pogue de la Fuente Krock

February 12, 2022

Tribute from Sandra Iger Kohler: Susan's death last Saturday, February 12th, came as a terrible shock to me although I had known since August, 2020 of her diagnosis of stage four cancer of the esophagus.

Since the news came, I have wanted to write about Susan, about her personal qualities and her life in the days after MHC. My relationship with her was a richly rewarding friendship of years, and it has taken me a while to realize that I can't do anything like a comprehensive job, but that my memories and perceptions will simply be part of a record from many people of Susan's character and life.

Yesterday I started an alphabetical list describing Susan. It's incomplete, but gives a kind of shorthand start: altruistic, brave, compassionate, funny, hopeful, mindful, questioning, resilient, stoic, wine-loving. I know that those of you who also knew her well would have many additions to this list.

My memories of Susan from undergraduate days are somewhat hazy, though after freshman year in which we were both in Pearsons, we were part of a group that moved together. Susan and I were both English majors, so we were in classes together throughout. After college there was a fairly long stretch of time when we weren't closely in touch - Susan moved to California after graduation, took a job in Human Resources, and eventually married her boss. He was older, divorced; they had a happy marriage, ended sadly by his death after a long illness. I vividly remember Susan's account of reading a poem by Yeats to him as he was dying.

When she was facing her own death, Susan felt that she had had a rich and fortunate life, with two long happy marriages, good relationships with stepchildren from each of them, and satisfying and successful work. At the end of her life she felt there was nothing left undone that troubled her. It's an enviable feeling, I think. And a tribute to Susan herself. She recovered from her first husband's death, difficult as she found her widowhood, and had the emotional energy which allowed her to love again.

Some years after her first husband's death, Susan reconnected with Curtis Krock, a man she had known from her home town in Arkansas,

who was now a physician, a pulmonologist. Curtis was married, but his wife was in a nursing home, suffering from multiple sclerosis. Susan and Curtis began a relationship, and after Curtis' wife's death, fifteen years ago, they were married. They were very happy together, though it was an adjustment for Susan to find herself living the life of a suburban wife in Champaign, Illinois. Susan kept her apartment in San Francisco, and she and Curtis started spending half of the year there. They enjoyed travelling and concert-going together.

In 2012, a group of six of us who had been close friends in college decided to have a "gang" reunion. (If I remember correctly, we'd seen each other at the Class of '61's fiftieth reunion, and started to stay in touch). We chose Chicago, staying at a hotel there, going to museums, on a river tour of the city, etc. Each of us brought along our partner. Some of us had been more in touch than others at earlier points. That was the first reunion of what we christened "the gang of six"; since then there were several others.

On a more personal note, my relationship to Susan was deeply important. A recurring comment in my emails to her was that I wished she lived down the block instead of so far away. I valued her enormously as a reader of my poems; she was wonderfully perceptive and generous with comments.

I would have trusted Susan with advice about anything. When there were occasional issues in the "gang" of people not getting along for one reason or another, Susan was the person who had a firm grip on the rights and wrongs involved. It felt to me as if there wasn't anything about which I couldn't "talk" to her.

I know that this is an incomplete account of Susan's life and qualities, and even of my relationship with her. But it will have to do. I hope it will be complemented by many of the rest of you, with your own memories and history of friendship.

I will end by saying that I know that memories of Susan will be a part of my life as long as I have a memory.