



## Susan Jane Van Gee

June 26, 1945 - April 16, 2019

Susan Jane Van Gee of Canton, GA passed away April 16, 2019 from a rare form of leukemia. Susan was born June 26, 1945 in Detroit, MI to Jane and Steven Van Gee. She was the youngest of two daughters, the oldest being Elizabeth Van Gee (Dunning), of Grand Rapids, MI.

Sue developed one of the key characteristics of her character early in life- empathy for other people and a desire to help them. She volunteered extensively working with younger children while she was still in her early teen years.

Susan spent her entire professional career as a psychiatric nurse, specializing in drug addiction and geriatric mental health. She graduated in 1971 with an Associate's degree from North Central Michigan College in Petoskey, MI, eventually earning her Bachelor's degree in Nursing from Michigan State University in Lansing, MI in 1975. She was awarded a full scholarship to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN, where she earned her Master's of Science in Nursing in 1977.

During her four years in Nashville at Vanderbilt, Susan served as a clinical specialist at Vanderbilt University Hospital, and was an Instructor of Nursing at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing. In February, 1978, seven victims of a propane gas explosion in Waverly, TN, came to Vanderbilt Hospital as patients. Susan organized a team of Vanderbilt Hospital specialists, including a hospital chaplain, a social worker, nurses and a psychiatrist, and then conducted eight weeks of education-therapy sessions for the patients and their family members. The success of the Waverly Family Group Sessions led Susan to try this education-therapy method with two other family groups of burn victims. She produced hard data on the effectiveness of the sessions, and presented her findings at the American Nursing Association clinical sessions held in Nashville in 1979. Her articles became required reading at several schools, including the Yale University School of Nursing. Susan also pioneered ground-breaking work in the area of alcoholism and family therapy.

In 1980, she met Michael Schirk, a musician in Nashville and teacher at the Blair School of Music, and the two were married in 1981 and remained happily married until her

passing. Susan's interest in music continued throughout her life, most recently serving as lead singer with the Rock of Agers rock band in Canton. She had a beautiful singing voice, an innate sense of timing and style, and a deep love for the art in all of its forms, including jazz, country and classical.

After leaving Nashville, Susan worked at Indiana University/Purdue University in Indianapolis, and Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic in Pittsburgh, where Mike worked in banking. The couple returned to Atlanta in 1985, and remained in the Atlanta area for most of the next 34 years. During that time, Sue worked in a variety of clinical and managerial capacities at various Atlanta-area hospitals, including Wesley Woods, West Paces Ferry, Eastside Medical Center, and Dekalb Medical Center.

Susan and Mike moved to Soleil Laurel in Canton, GA following retirement, where Sue was active in the Soleil Singers, water aerobics, Team Trivia, the Canasta Club and jamming with the Rock of Agers. She is remembered and loved as a person who was vibrant, humorous, witty, engaging and always a source of happiness to those whom she encountered. Sue recalled that she always winced when a medical Trivia question came up, as all eyes would turn toward her "as if I'm the font of all medical knowledge or something".

Sue was very self-effacing, never much for formality and pomp and circumstance, and always willing to empathize and help anyone in need. She once said "If you have a broken bone or cut, don't bring it to me.....take it to a nurse or doctor, and once they fix you up, I would love to get together with you and discuss how you feel about it".

Sue loved pets and animals of all kinds, including a clown car full of cats over the years. Her guardian angel was Bailey, her basset hound, who watched over her for 16 years. They were inseparable from the time that one of Sue's co-workers brought Bailey to the hospital to find him a new "forever" home.

Sue also had a serious side, especially when it came to patient care. Sue once intervened on behalf of an employee that a hospital administrator was trying to fire for missing work. Sue saved the employee's job, and the employee, years later, told Sue that she had literally "saved my life". Sue also viewed health care very holistically. In Pittsburgh, she noticed that one of her colleagues at Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic had a skin lesion on his arm which didn't look right. Sue pointed it out to him, he had it checked out, it was malignant, and was removed. To this day, this colleague credits her with saving his life.

She is survived by her husband, Michael Schirk of Canton GA, her niece and nephew, Kim Matthews and Mark Dunning, and her sister Elizabeth Dunning, all of Grand Rapids, MI. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the American Cancer Society.

Mass of Christian burial will be held on Thursday, April 25, 2019 at 11:00am at Our Lady of LaSalette Catholic Church, located at 2941 Sam Nelson Road, Canton, GA 30114.

Celebration of Life and reception will follow in the parish hall with light refreshments.

# Events

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**APR**   **Mass**                      11:00AM

**25**

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Our Lady Of LaSalette

2941 Sam Nelson Road, Canton, GA, US, 30114

# Comments

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“ Michael Schirk sent a virtual gift in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Michael Schirk - December 27, 2019 at 04:35 PM

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“ Sue, you were the Light of my life.

Michael Schirk - December 27, 2019 at 04:34 PM

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“ Priscilla Omega lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Priscilla Omega - April 28, 2019 at 10:17 AM

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“ Neely Denney lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



neely denney - April 23, 2019 at 05:41 PM

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“ I was so saddened to hear of Sue's passing. I have fond memories of her when we both attended Ferris State University. She was so friendly and lots of fun. Those were happy days. The day I arrived at Ferris I knew no one. However Sue made me feel very welcome and helped me adjust to college life.

joanne walrad - April 22, 2019 at 08:12 PM

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“ Micki Farley lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Micki Farley - April 22, 2019 at 07:22 PM

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“ Jody Sklar lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Jody Sklar - April 22, 2019 at 01:38 PM

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“ Michael Schirk lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Michael Schirk - April 22, 2019 at 08:00 AM

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“ I went to grade school with Susan. Even though that was many years ago. I will always remember her as a sweet smiling blonde. She always had a friendly attitude. I learned of her passing through Carla. Just wanted her family to know that she will be in my prayers.

Mary Ann Pawlak - April 21, 2019 at 02:02 PM

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“ Michael Schirk lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Michael Schirk - April 20, 2019 at 09:29 PM

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“ Michael Schirk lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Michael Schirk - April 20, 2019 at 09:21 PM

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“ 2 files added to the album Susan Van Gee



Michael Schirk - April 20, 2019 at 08:18 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Michael Schirk - April 20, 2019 at 02:51 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Michael Schirk - April 20, 2019 at 02:14 PM

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“ She will be missed . Always friendly and kind



Kathleen Anderson - April 19, 2019 at 07:30 PM

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“ Chris Komp lit a candle in memory of Susan Jane Van Gee



Chris Komp - April 19, 2019 at 09:36 AM