



Susan Sanborn Barker

June 18, 1949 - March 11, 2014

Susan Sanborn Barker

1949-2014

Susan Sanborn Barker, 64 of Northampton, MA, died peacefully on Tuesday, March 11, 2014 at Vibra Hospital of Western Massachusetts in Springfield, after a long struggle with polycystic kidney disease.

She was born on June 18, 1949 in Newton, MA, daughter and first child of Paul V. Barker and the late Patricia C. Barker. Susan was awarded her BS degree in Plant and Soil Science from University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA. During her time as a college student, she studied poetry with James Tate. She loved nature, and was a frequent visitor to Midmount, the family's rustic cabin in Hill, NH and Wellington State Park on Newfound Lake in Bristol, NH. Creative writing was Susan's true passion. Many of her poems were published in *Dirt*, *A Garden Journal* from the Connecticut River Valley, *The Massachusetts Review*, and *Dark Horse*.

Since 1997, Susan had been employed by Smith College as an administrative assistant in the Sophia Smith Collection and College Archives of the Neilson Library. In 2000, Susan transcribed Sylvia Plath's college journals prior to editing by her friend and colleague Karen Kukil and subsequent publication by

Faber and Faber in London and Anchor Books in New York. Susan also worked at the Academy of Music of Northampton, Whately Antiquarian Book Center, Hampshire Community Action Commission (Fuel Assistance), Highland Valley Elder Services, and Williston Northampton School. She was a long time member of the Unitarian Society of Northampton.

Susan is survived by her cherished son Ian W. Downs, his partner Monica Sumner, and three grandchildren, Ethan Sumner, Mace Sumner Downs, and Odin Sumner Downs, all of Whately, MA; her father Paul V. Barker, her younger brother John M. Barker and his wife Patricia A. Barker, and her youngest brother Peter F. Barker and his wife Christina A. Schaefer, all of Hill, NH; her nieces Erin Barker Rice, Ruth Purnell Young, Jane Purnell, and Fiona Barker, and nephews John Barker and Alex Purnell. Susan was predeceased by her beloved sister Robin B. Purnell of Washington, VA.

Susan's life will be celebrated with family and friends at the Unitarian Society of Northampton, 220 Main Street, Northampton, MA, at 5 pm on Wednesday, June 18, 2014 with a private family burial in Hill, NH planned for later in June. New England Funeral & Cremation Center, LLC is assisting the family. Please visit www.nefcc.net for online expressions of sympathy.

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Tribute Wall

JB

“ I offer the deepest condolences to all of Susan's family and friends.

Joe Bialek - February 14, 2023 at 10:25 AM

KD

“ We are so sorry to hear of Susan's passing. We will keep her in our thoughts and prayers.

Keith and Barbara Downs - February 14, 2023 at 10:25 AM

MC

“ I am so sorry for the loss of both of your sisters Susan and Robin. Please know that my thoughts and prayers are with you.
Love,
Mary

Mary Crimmins - February 14, 2023 at 10:25 AM

JG

“ We grew up together all through elementary schools, etc. in Sharon, Mass. We went to the same Sunday School. We kept in touch via Facebook. I lost a great friend. But I have to know that we will see each other again in heaven. That is something that you and I can hold onto.

Jean Leavitt Goodwin - February 14, 2023 at 10:25 AM