

Valentine, Susan (October 19, 1940—September 7, 2023)



Susan Valentine, known by all as Suzy, arrived at Grinnell College in the fall of 1961, immediately establishing her place among the pioneering women who lived in Mears Hall during the first year it was temporarily re-born as a women's residence hall. New students had to wear Grinnell beanies that year, so tall Suzy was an obvious new presence on campus.

It is fitting that Suzy's only club affiliation during her two years at Grinnell was the International Relations Club. Home in New Jersey during the summer of her sophomore year, Suzy met Nelson Small Schmitt, a Brazilian whom she eventually married. She withdrew from Grinnell, and attended the University of Pennsylvania, studying psychology before marrying Schmitt in July of 1961 and moving with him to Sao Paulo.

Suzy formed a strong interest in gardening during her 32 years in Sao Paulo, where she gardened at her own home, and did volunteer work for various environmental causes. The Schmitt's three sons were born in Brazil during the 1960's; all three were to attend college in the United States. After a divorce, Suzy returned to the United States, settling in Florida where, she noted, all of her activities dealt "with the natural world."

The gardening interest continued as Suzy became president and founder of "Grow Foundation," and worked with a new partner, Mel Bartholomew, in Alpine, Utah, where together they had a business, Square Foot Gardening. From there Suzy lived in other locales, always focusing on her interest in nature.

Suzy died of cancer on September 7, 2023, in Bonita Springs, Florida.

Nancy Welch Barnby (author)