

Janne Walker Kansas City Eulogy by Geoff Roser

May 7th, 2022

Thank you all for joining us today. Thanks for coming - some from afar. We are here to celebrate the life of this wonderful woman who touched so many lives.

Janne Walker passed away on Feb 2nd, 2022 at the age of 80. We really thought she was going to outlive us all! Janne is my godmother. She has been part of my life for all 52 years of it. In the early years, I didn't know her well because we didn't live near each other. I have fond memories of birthday cards and Christmas gifts sent in the mail. I also enjoyed catching up on the phone and hearing her amazing stories and adventures. Janne's world was an exciting and positive world that everyone wanted to be part of.

My memories of Janne begin when I was in high school on the East Coast which was when she lived in Norfolk. I remember a Spring Break trip with three of my best friends. Janne invited us to come down to Norfolk and spend some time with her. We descended upon her historic home on Hanover Avenue and she spoiled us rotten. Always the hostess and entertainer. As the saying goes, there is no such thing as a stranger in Janne's world. A stranger is just a friend she hadn't met yet. She had amazing food and activities lined up for us. That house was magical with its winding staircases and vintage architecture. We truly had a blast and didn't want to go back to school!

Janne was there for high school and college graduation and of course for my wedding. She was my biggest fan, and we loved being together. Janne became a regular part of our family activities. She was there for most of the holidays. Thanksgiving for sure, sometimes Christmas and Easter, and in the later years when we became huge fans of the Outer Banks, she would join us for those adventures. She was Aunt Janne to my kids, and she spoiled them just like she spoiled me. She was truly a member of our family and we were lucky to have her.

I didn't know much about Janne's Missouri years as she was already established in Virginia when I was young. She certainly talked about it though. She was a huge football and basketball fan. She loved the Missouri Tigers and had a personalized license plate to match. I am sorry I never got to meet her parents. Her father, Ephraim Amos Markey, passed away in 1978. He was apparently quite the public figure. Perhaps some of you remember him? He was known as "Coach". He graduated from Central Missouri State Teachers College - which became Central Missouri State University and is now known as the University of Central Missouri. He was a teacher of sports and science. After college, he taught at Marshall High School and Northeast High School. He was a highly respected teacher and coach, and his football teams dominated the Kansas City school district for years. Janne was quite fond of her father and established a football scholarship at UCM in his name.

Janne's mother, Mary Jane Irvine Markey, lived until 1994. Unfortunately, I don't have much information about her. Janne was an only child and adored her parents. Janne will be joining them this afternoon at Ridge Park Cemetery in Marshall.

When I think of Janne, the first thing that comes to mind is CATS. Janne LOVED her cats. They were her children for sure. She told stories about the cats like we tell stories about our kids. When we had to move out of the Hanover house, she had 12 cats living there. She could only take two of them over to her new assisted living facility so there was quite a bit of heartache involved with deciding which ones had to go. Those cats really made her sparkle.

Janne was also a big fan of the orient. Having spent some time in Japan, she adopted the culture in the way she decorated her house. I was fortunate to live in Japan for a year when my father was stationed there in the mid-80's. It was fun swapping stories about the bullet trains, eating sushi, growing bonsai trees, geisha dresses, and visiting various cities across the main island.

Another pastime of Janne's was her love for cars. She was so proud of her 1977 280Z. She had a little collection going there for many years. She also had a fire engine red 1973 Fiat and a 1968 Volkswagen Bus. Those cars were so special to Janne. She was very proud of them and put a lot of effort into maintaining them. It was a sad day when she was no longer able to drive them.

There is so much more to share about Janne, and I hope others will offer some stories for the group today. Her trips to Kennedy Space Center, cheering for Mizzou football, drinking coffee and coca-cola...but particularly around her love of teaching and the joy she got out of helping students. This translated directly into the Norfolk community where she helped folks from all walks of life no matter what was needed. She was one of the most kind, generous, and empathic people I have ever met, and she taught me a lot about giving back. For that, I am forever thankful and grateful.

Janne's last few years were rough. Dementia grabbed her about eleven years ago and the Alzheimer's came a few years after that. It's a blessing that Janne's neighbor and guardian angel, Sally Hartman, called me that Fall day in 2011. Sally and her husband Ron invited Janne over for dinner one evening. Janne asked a rather innocent question about how much her electric bill should be. Sally offered a number for their house then smartly asked Janne how much her bill was. It was five times as high as Sally's. This led to some more questions and turns out it wasn't just the electric bill that hadn't been paid. Without getting into all the details, Sally assisted Janne getting her current overdue bills squared away, but she knew there was a bigger issue here. She found my name on one of Janne's emergency contact lists, and made the call.

Fortunately, I was in a situation where I could help. And that began the final chapter of Janne's life. This last decade we saw a gradual decline in her cognitive abilities. My mother, sister, and I took this on with the goal of protecting Janne and making her as comfortable as possible as she lived out her years. There were some amazing people along the way, and I am

thankful for that. Janne passed peacefully in her sleep at Our Lady of Hope Nursing Home in Richmond, VA.

Thank you again for coming today. We are honored to be here and to fulfill her wishes to be buried with her parents. My mom, sister, and I will be heading over to Ridge Park Cemetery to lay her in her final resting place. All are welcome to join us.

Thanks again for your time, and please feel free to share here today.