

5-5-25

Gail Suzedell Saxton passed away on April 30, 2025, at the age of 77 following a brief but intense battle with bile duct cancer.

Gail is survived by her husband of 56 years, Cliff; their daughter, Laura Heiman, and her husband, Mark; grandchildren Eleanor, Oliver, and Edith; her sister, Ann Suzedell; her brother, Eugene, and his wife, Bernadette; nieces Elizabeth and Emma Suzedell; and nephew Joseph Suzedell.

Born in Quincy, Massachusetts, Gail attended Quincy High School and received her bachelor's degree in molecular biology from Wellesley College. She met Cliff in 1968 when Wellesley and Wesleyan University, Cliff's college, performed a joint glee club concert. They were married in 1969 as Cliff began active duty in the U.S. Navy. Cliff's military assignments included a tour in the Philippines where Gail was able to join him for what turned into a wonderful, 13-month adventure as they resided outside the Navy base in the small fishing village of San Antonio, Zambales, on the island of Luzon. After the Navy, they returned to Wesleyan where Cliff served as director of public information. Early in their marriage, Gail was a clinical lab technician, but she was always proudest of being a skilled homemaker. The couple moved to St. Louis in 1976 with three-month-old Laura, and they have resided in Des Peres since 1978.

Gail was an active member of Peace United Church of Christ, Webster Groves, where her special activity was supervising the prayer quilt ministry. She was board secretary of the St. Louis Audubon Society and a leading member of Audubon's "Bring Conservation Home" program, and a board member of the Every Child's Hope Children's Home. Among her favorite pastimes were quilting, crocheting, knitting, gardening, doll-making, and two book groups.

Gail and Cliff also have served as archivists for the 1880s White Sulphur Springs Hotel in Mann's Choice, Pennsylvania, which is now owned by Officers' Christian Fellowship, a military ministry. They have been involved for nearly 50 years in helping to renovate and preserve the picturesque, historic property whose centerpiece is the classic nineteenth-century former main hotel building.

Gail was beloved in part because she was uniquely down-to-earth and honest -- absolutely lacking pretense and able to forge a lasting friendship with anyone she met. Her love, competence, compassion, and grace benefitted every organization to which she belonged and everyone in her wide circle of friends, but her main focus always remained on her family. To younger generations, she always managed to find a way to make "practical magic," whether building a pillow fort, hosting late-night cookie-baking, or pausing in a craft project to teach others how to do what she was doing.

Gail and Cliff traveled widely in the United States, pursuing shared interests ranging from carnivals and circuses to fiber festivals, model trains, and rock-and-roll concerts. Her favorite trip was a memorable 1991 railroad journey from Seattle to St. Louis aboard a chartered private passenger car from whose observation platform they watched the eerie Northern Lights. Through the years, the two co-authored six books, three about the White Sulphur Springs Hotel and the others documenting Saxton family history.

Gail's final days, while marred by the late-stage discovery of aggressive cancer, were typically characterized by optimism, genuine appreciation for her care-givers, and a determination to remain in touch with friends. Her commitment to others was reciprocated, and she often said she felt as if she was "floating on a cloud of love."

The family is especially appreciative of the care provided by Missouri Baptist Hospital, family friends Cora Willard and Dr. Jay Marshall, and BJC Hospice.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Officers' Christian Fellowship.

The memorial service will be livestreamed. A link will be provided on the website of Bopp Chapel -- boppchapel.com.