

SUSAN JEAN BUYS SPAGNUOLO

January 18,1940 - July 1, 2022

By Elizabeth Dudley

On January 18, 1940, in Chicago, Illinois a bright, shining star was born to Victor and Zada Buys. Susan Jean Buys came into this world to make it a better place, and boy did she ever! She excelled at school graduating from DeWitt High School at age 16, June 1956. She was an accomplished pianist and a beautiful singer with a voice of an angel. She met the love of her life Frank Spagnuolo on a train to Chicago in August 1956 and they eloped that October. The two love birds went on to have 10 children, 5 boys and 5 girls. Susan (Paul) Charron, Frank (Angela) Spagnuolo, Mark (Tracy) Spagnuolo, Jennifer Fields, Cynthia (Enrique) Salfate, Elizabeth (Robert) Dudley, Pat (Adriana) Spagnuolo, Anthony Spagnuolo (deceased), Leticia Spagnuolo and Nicholas Spagnuolo. Her husband Frank died of a heart attack in 1985. Susan carried on raising 5 children all under age 18 by herself. She was able to do it because she had earned two college degrees while raising a large family. She instilled the importance of education into her children and 9 out of the 10 have college degrees and the other child is a master of everything. If it is broken, he can fix it.

Sue graduated from Michigan State University with a degree in Child Development and Education in 1970. She then taught first grade for 7 years at Fowlerville Public Schools. While teaching school and raising 8 children she went to the University of Detroit Law School at night and got her degree in 1977. After graduating Law School, she took a 1-year hiatus and taught at an American School in Santa Cruz, Bolivia with her 8 children in tow. Her husband Frank visited often. She returned to the United States in 1978 and in 1979, while she was 9 months pregnant with her 9th child, she wrote and passed the Michigan State Law Bar Exam on her first try. No one was surprised at this because she was such a smart cookie and a wonderful mother.

She practiced law in Howell Michigan from 1979 to 2018. Her favorite job was working for the Legal Aid Office of Livingston County. She loved helping people but hated charging them for her work. Legal Aid allowed her to help people that were financially challenged, and she loved the work. Sue always fought for the underdog and would take on any cause she felt that was unjust, especially if children were involved. She often said, "I love kids so much that I have 10 of my own."

Sue was a devoted attorney and had a great respect for the law. She would often get a call from a client in a crisis and before you knew it, they would be joining the family for a meal or staying with us until they could find safe accommodations. She never made much money practicing law, but the joy of helping others was priceless to her.

She loved to travel and visited more than 20 countries. She traveled often after she retired, especially to Nepal, Turkey and Colombia. She loved the elephants, parrots, and monkeys. She was a brave and adventurous woman and made friends everywhere she went. She also loved taking her children, grandchildren, and friends to strange and exotic places if they were willing to join her. She had 14 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren and loved them all dearly.

Sue led a full life and made a positive difference in the world. She made things happy and fun. Sue was a very colorful character and always did things her own way. Her life mattered and she touched so many people and improved so many lives. She is going to be sadly missed by all that knew and loved her. Rest in Peace Mother we loved you so much and our lives will never be the same. The sun will never feel as bright in a world without her.

She enjoyed life and lived it to the fullest until her son Anthony and grandson Oliver died in 2021. Her beloved Yorkshire Terrier, Pearl, was mauled and killed on May 28, 2022. These losses broke her heart, and she was never the same.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Frank Spagnuolo, her son, Anthony Spagnuolo, her grandson, Oliver Salfate, her parents, Victor and Zada Buys as well as her brother Don Buys who died in a tragic car accident Christmas Eve 1957.

Sue lived to help people, especially those unable to help themselves. It was the reason God put her on this Earth.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that you please consider donating to "Oliver Stones" which is a non-profit organization named after her grandson, Oliver. It supplies headstones to children and young adults whose families cannot afford one OR theinfo@nepalelelephanyssanctuary.org. This group provides care to elephants in Nepal.

Prayers for the family are greatly appreciated.