

MURGATROYD #15 is an apazine that Denny Lien (2528 15th Ave. S. / Minneapolis MN 55404 USA) didn't expect to do quite this soon. 19 November 1980.

Most of you know by now, and probably all will by the time this sees print in ANZAPA.

Six days ago Dave Wixon called me at work. I was harassed with some since-forgotten minor crisis; refused to talk to him at once, and promised to call back. I later called back, and Dave told me that Susan Wood was dead.

A couple of days ago I took out the file drawer that I use for apazines of mine waiting to be mailed. The file folder marked WOOD, SUSAN had two zines in it: my last contributions to ANZAPA and STIPPLE-APA. I took them out; reseeded the apazines in other folders, and ripped up the WOOD folder. Dead.

In the days in between, I accepted a bit, cried a bit, kept my tongue quiet among people whom I felt did not need to know; talked on phone or to face of others; had bad dreams a bit. And bad daydreams.

I last saw Susan at WorldCon this year; not a good Worldcon for her; not one of the better ones for me. One of the days I saw her was Thursday; probably the best for her. I got off a work stint (badge checking at the con party) and wandered to other parties, including Baltimore's, where the second AntiFan movie was being shown. I ran into Susan and sat with her to watch it; we laughed together at the right places. Afterward I discovered that the party was out of beer and since Susan was also in the mood to partyhop she offered to take me to the SFWA party several hotels and several blocks away. After an overcrowded and oversmokey room, simply walking along dark and semi-deserted streets with a friend was a treat. I don't remember what we talked of.

I first saw Susan at TorCon in 1973. My first worldcon; I knew almost nobody except the Minneapolis fans I'd come with (I'd been in fandom for over a decade, but always as a hermit). I didn't even know enough not to go to programming, and so went to the Hugo Awards, and so saw Susan dash up shrieking to receive her shared Hugo for Energumen. (At least I think I remember it--but I've heard about often enough since then that it may be a false memory.) For a rather shy and rather overwhelmed semi-unknown fan, it was nice to see a Big Name Fan excited enough to behave like a kid at Christmas. I'd like to be able to react with child-like or adult-like responses as situations warrant, and try to do so. But Susan was always better at it. I was surprised, years later, to find she was a couple of years younger than me, but there was no reason to be surprised; she always seemed both older and younger than me or almost anyone else, at the same time. A chrono-chameleon.

1980: We got to the SFWA suite after several wrong turns. I made a rapid survey and decided I knew exactly one other person there well enough to do my barnacle imitation: Bob Vardeman. I attached myself to him long enough to let Susan circulate without feeling a need to play hostess/protector. She did, but kept checking back. I discovered there were in fact more people there that I knew, and talked to them while drinking the beer that Susan made a point of directing me to; she'd promised to find me some and had done so and I should drink it in good health. And so I did.

After 1973, I next saw Susan at Aussiecon in 1975. In the intervening two years, my self-concidence in fannish crowds had edged up from "poor" to "below average." As there were only some sixty North American fans flying down together and travelling together, it might be thought that it would be difficult for the shyest of fen not

to rapidly get to know them all. Nonetheless, I managed; Susan Wood was the co-fan guest of honor; a Hugo winner; a genuine PhD in literature with a genuine university appointment who still managed to produce high-quality fannish prose for large circulation fanzines. I was a graduate school dropout with a civil service job who produced one apazine on ditto each month except the ones I didn't feel up to it. I tend to take myself too seriously, but retain some sense of propriety and one rule of fannish etiquette: don't bother the Important People. And I thought Susan was an Important Person.

Well, she was and, dead or not, is, to me and to others. But unlike me, she was never self-important, and when the con was almost over and I was adding depression to my other hangups, sought me out, talked to me, made me feel comfortable talking to her.

1980: After an hour or two at the SFWA suite, Susan and I decided to leave. (I don't recall who decided; five years later, we were still comfortable enough so that it didn't matter; old friends with a bit of telepathy operating between us.) We walked back to the main hotel hand-in-hand and talked. She told me a story from her childhood; of running away from a would-be attacker. I'd never before heard anything about her as a child, or conceived of her running away from anything. We said goodnight; hugged; separated.

In 1976 I published my Aussiecon report in RUNE. Susan wrote me about it, and sent me her fanzine, AMOR; I added her to my minute non-apa mailing list for my zines. She said, among other things, "You are a Funny Person." It's nice to be something.

Susan was also a Funny Person, and several other types of Person, as the need arose. Sometimes several types at once. Serious constructive frivolity; very nice.

1980: I didn't see her on Friday or Saturday morning. According to later report, these were not happy times for her; she got into serious arguments, behaved erratically, antagonized people, and retreated to her room to hide and hold herself together.

Between 1976 and 1980 I saw her just six times; twice at worldcons (Kansas City and Phoenix), twice in Vancouver, twice in Madison-with-a-stop-in-Minneapolis. We exchanged fanzines and occasional letters, and spoke on the phone at rare occasions. In Vancouver I visited her house, petted her cat and her Hugo, lounged with other fen on her sinfully thick shag rug, drank wine and talked. In Minneapolis I got to fix her a gigantic breakfast to combat her jet lag, and was told she had just had dental surgery done. At KC Con we started a Silly Tradition of seeing each other across a floor, jumping up and down a bit and running arms outstretched toward each other, only to swerve at the last moment and hug the people we were each with instead. As traditions go, it was even sillier than most.

1980: Early Saturday afternoon I headed for the auditorium for another stint of guard duty, and was overtaken by Susan calling out to me and running toward me. She seemed tired and unhappy and hyper, and when I said that I was happy to see her responded that I was probably the only person at the con who was. She wanted food and an ear to talk to but asked only for the former. I escorted her to a snack bar, told her I was late for the job I had promised to do, and would call her when I got off work three hours later. From anyone else, almost, I would have been concerned, but this was Susan, who was all things to all fans and who could take of herself and thus could not possibly have been asking for help. Only slightly concerned, I left to guard for three hours a door that no one tried to steal. I never saw her again.

At Iggycon she told me about being happy Joyce and I had found each other; I began as usual to make a joke about it and became honest for a minute instead. I don't drop defenses often; I'm glad I did so at least once around her. She made me want to do so. At Boston I didn't talk when I could have, and when I got off work and called her, she no longer wanted to. And when I persisted, was told to leave her alone and hung up upon.

No moral, no ending, only memories. Goodbye, Susan. Forgive me. Thank you for Being.