



## Susan Scheller Johnson

May 13, 1938 - March 14, 2024

Susan Scheller Johnson died at Conifer House in Corvallis, Oregon on Thursday, March 14, 2024, at the age of 85. Susan was born the first child of George A. Scheller and Katherine (Forman) Scheller on May 13, 1938, in Newark, New Jersey. Her identical twin sister, Ann, was born moments later.

Susan and Ann, and their little brother Tony, grew up in Short Hills, New Jersey, where their father operated his medical practice in the other half of their home. Susan and Ann were inseparable. They took on all the artistic endeavors their school offered, from designing theatre sets to working on the school yearbook. When they graduated from Millburn High School in 1956, their classmates voted them most artistic.

Growing up, not only were Ann and Susan inseparable, but it was generally agreed they were indistinguishable, a notion they did nothing to dispel, dressing identically. They had each other from day one. Ann's husband recently pointed out that this gave both of them a unique grasp on life. They were never "I", but always "We". This was a point of view they carried throughout their lives, even as they went off to different colleges and their own individual lives. People who know Susan surely remember her indefatigable willingness to give of herself to help others.

Susan studied Fine Art at Connecticut College. She met her husband, Curtis

Johnson, at a Yale Outing Club event. Their first date was an Outing Club spelunking expedition where her willingness to belly crawl down a tiny, black cave entrance won his heart. Curtis and Susan married in 1960. She taught elementary school in New Haven, Connecticut while Curtis finished at Yale. After college they went west. Life brought them to Washington, Oregon, California, and finally back Oregon in 1968. Corvallis has been their home ever since. Along the way, they had a son, Walter, and a daughter, Heather.

Susan earned a Master of Fine Arts from Oregon State University. She taught visual art at all levels, including at Linn-Benton Community College and at Oregon State University. In 1985 she temporarily set aside her studio work to become the Executive Director of the Corvallis Arts Center. Her family remembers this eight-year period as intense and rewarding for Susan. Many people remember her contribution to Corvallis over this period as being especially rewarding for the community. She was involved in getting public art in Corvallis, developing the da Vinci Days festival, and working with the Madison Avenue Task Force and the Oregon Arts Commission.

Returning to her studio, Susan joined Waterstone Gallery, an artists' cooperative in Portland. During her two decades as a member of Waterstone, her art gained recognition across Oregon. In 2008, her work was chosen for an exhibition in the Oregon Governor's Office. She was especially proud to be chosen for a retrospective of her life's work at the Corvallis Arts Center in 2020.

Susan and Curtis also made travel an important part of their life, traveling extensively in Europe and further afield, to places such as Angkor Wat and Machu Pichu.

After 61 years of marriage, Curtis passed away in 2021. Heather and Walter then took care of Susan without reservation, knowing she had earned all the

love they could give back to her. Susan is survived by her two children, Walter Johnson and Heather Kier, her brother Tony Scheller, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The Corvallis Arts Center, 700 SW Madison Ave., Corvallis, OR 97333. A celebration of Susan's life will be held at The Corvallis Arts Center on Sunday, April 28, 2024 at 3:00 pm. All who remember Susan are welcome.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

APR **28**. 3:00 PM (PT)

Corvallis Arts Center  
700 SW Madison Ave.  
Corvallis, OR  
<https://theartscenter.net/>

# Tribute Wall

NH

“ In 1976 I took some post graduate classes at Oregon State University. One was Art Elementary School Art from Susan Johnson. Her class was the most useful art class I ever took. We finished with a medium size booklet housing our finished products...many using items you could scavenge...like absorbent meat packaging for printmaking, and buying cheap or free end rolls of newsprint at newspaper offices or grocery stores. Art teachers end up seeing tons of students with hardly a budget. She taught us useful and practical lessons while still being creative. Years later, I ended up teaching for four years at Taos Pueblo, NM. That notebook saved us. I left it with the school and often wish I still had that booklet of ideas. Nancy Hagood, Corvallis, OR

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**Nancy Hagood** - May 01, 2024 at 12:40 PM

RB

“ I did not know Susan Johnson, but on Feb. 28, 2024, I saw a beautiful little painting by her on ReSaleArt in Portland, and I fell in love with it and called them and purchased it. I tried to find out more about her and realized that she was active in the arts community in Corvallis. How odd it turned out to be that I received delivery of "Girl with Umbrella" on April 27, 2024, and then discovered that she had died just two weeks after I bought it and that I first held it in my hands the day before her memorial service. I will treasure "Girl with Umbrella" even more because of those close encounters ...  
Sincerely, Randi Bjornstad (Eugene)

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**Randi Bjornstad** - April 28, 2024 at 09:19 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Celebration of Life*



McHenry Funeral Home - April 03, 2024 at 11:53 AM



“ Susan was a mentor and friend to so many of us. Following her retirement from *The Arts Center* her studio work just took off. Every critique group meeting she had some new project she was excited to share. It was inspiring to see her artistic career flourish. So glad we were able to host her retrospective at *The Arts Center* despite the pandemic.



Cynthia Spencer - March 21, 2024 at 05:33 PM