

Susie Huston



Susie Huston (1946-1992) was a charismatic, fun loving, and talented AMI Elementary and Primary Montessori guide who brought her impressive talent for community building to the Corvallis Montessori School in 1976.

Raised in Shaker Heights, Ohio, Susie graduated from Ohio State University and did her AMI primary training with Margaret Stephenson in Washington DC and her elementary training in Bergamo, Italy with Sr. Camillo Grazzini. While in Italy in 1975-76, she was recruited by a group of parents to start an AMI elementary program in Corvallis. Pat Neill, a primary teacher at that time, recalls that when he saw her application "she was still on a Polish ship coming back from Europe. I remember thinking that if she was doing that she must be fun... and smart!"

Susie was skilled at gathering people together, and she helped make Corvallis Montessori School a vibrant and thriving community. Montessori was a way of life for her. She was a master gardener and active in a group of basket makers. She developed close relationships with older neighbors on her country road, swapping recipes and wisdom traditions. A city girl originally, she learned how to make soap, weave lavender wands, and care for cows, pigs, sheep, and chickens. And among her friends and neighbors, she was central in organizing regular potlucks.

While working as an elementary guide at CMS, Susie met and married Jerry Miller and moved to a farm in Alsea. She ran the elementary classroom until June 1981, two months before their daughter Peri Rose was born. For the next six years, Susie cared for Peri and her sister, Quinlyn Kree, and for the farm, while also substitute teaching at Philomath Montessori and helping with elementary math at CMS. In 1987, both girls were old enough to attend CMS. Susie took a position as a primary guide, and all three of them commuted to town to join the CMS community once again, until Susie's death in an automobile accident in June of 1992.

Susie was working as a primary guide when Doni Manning-Cyrus joined CMS. "Susie took me under wing and I thought she was the coolest woman I had ever met," Doni remembers. "She respected concentration in the classroom above all else. She observed me in my classroom giving a representation to a child who had begun washing the hand washing pitcher with the nail brush. 'I would never have

interrupted that,' she said with a good-humored chuckle. Did you see how she was totally into that?"

As Shelley Fay Smith, one of her friends in Alsea, remembers, "One time I asked Susie directly how she managed everything so fully. She told me that for her it was a matter of being completely at ease, totally comfortable wherever she was, in whatever setting. Perhaps it was her way of saying, I live in the moment. I never felt rushed or hurried in her presence, whether it was an hour-long visit or a fifteen-minute one. Susie had a wonderful gift of uplifting those in her company; brightening others' lives. She was indeed a special woman who graced this world."

With thanks to Kathleen Lloyd, PhD, and Susan Strasser, PhD, for creating this biography.