

## In Memoriam: Susan J. Bruns '78 '95G

**She loved horses from her earliest days and made them her life's work**

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At age two, Susan Bruns' favorite toy was a plastic spring rocking horse that she "rode" by the hour in what is now Durham's historic Three Chimneys Inn. At the time, the inn was a private home rented to her father, the late Paul Eric

Bruns, UNH professor of forestry and chair of the forestry department. Sue's love of horses soon became the focus of her life. "She was completely dedicated to animals in general and horses in particular," says her brother Eric.

Twelve years older than her sister, Pamela Brayton '67 recalls Sue taking riding lessons throughout her childhood and working on horse farms during school vacations. And she remembers once being sent to the barn in search of her little sister, only to find her doing homework while lying in the hay beneath Corona, her favorite horse. Sue calmly told her horrified sister not to worry because "Corona would never hurt me."

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“I learned early to buy Sue presents instead of giving her money to celebrate special occasions,” says Pamela. “I realized she would always spend money gifts on hay instead of on something for herself.”

Love of animals was something Sue shared with their mother, says Pamela, remembering a house filled with dogs and cats as the children, including their brother Robert '69, were growing up. Later in life, when their mother developed Alzheimer's disease and moved to a specialized care facility, Sue visited often, always bringing an animal along to brighten her mother's day.

After graduation, Sue worked at UMass Amherst before returning to UNH, where she managed the university's light horse stable, taught a generation of equestrians and served as a member of the Durham Ambulance Corps. She later worked at LSU as a lab assistant in the veterinary school before finding her dream job at ARK at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York City.

A privately owned animal airport terminal, ARK's services include the boarding, kenneling, importing, exporting and transportation of animals of all sizes. Sue worked with the horses, which by law must be quarantined for specific periods of time before entering the U.S. It was the perfect job for her, say Eric and Pamela, because she was able to put all her knowledge to use and she worked with people whose intense love of animals equaled her own. In addition to being physically strong, Sue brought many of the skills of a horse whisperer to her job at ARK, adds Pamela. If

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a stallion was nervous or frightened, she would always be able to calm the animal down.

After sustaining a serious pelvic injury in an accident several years ago, Sue was told she would never ride again. Determined to prove her doctor wrong, she so impressed him with her recovery that he asked her to make a video of herself on horseback to inspire other patients with similar injuries.

For several weeks last winter, Sue wasn't feeling well, says her sister, and on February 22, realizing that she was seriously ill, her thoughts were for her family and her beloved animals. She called ARK to check on the horses before calling 911 and Pamela, who stayed on the phone with her as EMTs and police rushed to her aid. Sue died from an aortic dissection just as help arrived. Her family held her memorial service in the same room in Three Chimneys Inn where she had once spent so many happy hours on her rocking horse.

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