



## Sue Reid Williams

May 19, 1924 - July 16, 2020

Sue Rootes Reid Williams passed away on July 16, 2020 at her home. Born May 19, 1924, Sue was a life long Memphian. She lived her entire life at her home on Stonewall, which had been built by her Grandmother, Shan Taylor Rootes, in 1910. Sue grew up with her extended family on Stonewall with her grandmother, her mother and father (Sue Demaris and Neil Gordon Reid), and her aunt and uncle (George and Mary Rootes). She was an only child and was doted on by all. Her mother was married in the house and Sue also was married there in 1964 to the love of her life, Robert K. Williams. Robert, an architect, predeceased her in 1982.

Sue had a deep connection to her city and neighborhood. She served in various roles in the Evergreen Historic District Association and as Secretary for the Historic District Alliance. Notably, her leadership proved invaluable in helping to preserve the Evergreen Neighborhood. She worked to stop the proposed I-40 expressway expansion that demolished hundreds of houses through the neighborhood. After that plan was halted, she worked to get historic zoning to guide the rebuilding. The beautiful blending of the old and new that characterizes the current neighborhood is a testament to her efforts. This, along with her many other efforts to enhance and beautify Midtown Memphis, was recognized by her selection to the 1996 class of Leadership Memphis.

Sue's interests were broad and varied. With her husband Robert, she shared a deep passion for architecture and genealogy. Her insatiable curiosity extended well beyond this to the arts, fashion, history, books and libraries, gardening, travel, and poetry. Her early education at a small Midtown school— "Miss Emma's" — left an indelible mark on her. There she read and memorized classical literature and was immersed in famous plays and operas. This knack for memorization stuck with her for the rest of her life as she could effortlessly recall an appropriate quote or verse for any occasion. She graduated from Central High School in 1941 and after a brief time at Memphis State embarked on a long and varied career in advertising. After stops at Goldsmith's, Lowenstein's, Plough, the Cotton Council, and Sears, Sue settled in at the Julius Lewis Department Store where, after 15 years, she retired as the Director of Advertising. She often said that she made her

living with her imagination; and it was this imagination that made her life so fulfilling.

During her working career, she saved her pennies and traveled extensively — before traveling became commonplace -- and even traveled alone through Europe and South America. After she married Robert, they traveled to many of the places where he served during World War II with the 82nd Airborne Division including Normandy where he was a glider pilot during the D-Day invasion.

Sue served as a volunteer in other capacities including as President of the Friends of the University of Memphis Library, a member of the Women's Exchange, a long time member of the Midtown Garden Club, a docent at Elmwood Cemetery, an honorary member of the Memphis Ad Federation and a member of the King's Daughters

The most important aspect of life for Sue was her faith. She was a life-long Presbyterian and was a member of Evergreen Presbyterian from birth. There, she was an ordained Elder, the first woman to serve as Clerk of the Session and served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees. She also served on many church committees, taught Sunday school, and was the Church librarian. A student of theology, Sue was a sought after teacher in the Church, yet her faith was very simple, comfortable and unwavering. In recent years, she joined Idlewild Presbyterian to be near her family.

Sue leaves behind her cousins Emily Bishop, Julie Mitchell, John Henley Cottrell and Grace Gorell. She is also survived by her sister-in-law, Sue O.Williams, her nephew Alex Williams (Cindy) and their sons Reid and Jordan, her niece Cecile Leggett (David) and their children Caitlin and Will and her nephew Edward Lee Williams (Goy) and their daughter Sarah.

Throughout her life, Sue made long lasting strong friendships. She considered Niel Prosser, the son of one of her very good friends, as her son. When he married, she also "adopted" his wife Sarah and later their son Nathan along with Niel's nieces, Michelle, Alysia and Reneé Prosser who considered Sue their grandmother.

Sue had a host of other members of her "love family" who all feel very fortunate to have known her and feel a strong kinship with her. There are too many to mention, but a few that have been especially close are Gloria Pickett, Charles Chandler, Ruth Hendrix, Rick Marcus, Bill Graves and Emily Adams Keplinger.

Memorials can be sent to Evergreen Historic District Association, Elmwood Cemetery, Idlewild Presbyterian Church, or the charity of your choice.



# Cemetery

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## **Elmwood Cemetery**

824 S. Dudley Street

Memphis, TN, 38104

# Comments

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“ 1 file added to the album Zoom recording



**Canale Funeral Directors** - July 21 at 05:55 PM

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“ Sue was my next door neighbor for the last 3 years. I enjoyed our visits over that short period of time. She was a wealth of information and I learned something from her at every visit. She was a sweet and kind person that I will never forget. Rest In Peace Sue!

**Denise Parker** - July 20 at 02:05 PM

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“ 1 file added to the album Special moments with Sue



**Robert & Catherine Goodwin** - July 19 at 06:36 PM

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“ 1 file added to the album Special moments with Sue



**Robert & Catherine Goodwin** - July 19 at 06:35 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jenny “Scott” Jecmen - July 19 at 04:43 PM

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jenny “Scott” Jecmen - July 19 at 04:35 PM



“ This goes with the picture of Sue above looking like a Starlet.

She is, was my Godmother and very close family friend since the early 1950,s. Too many stories to tell.

But she was always the Most classic fabulous grand Southern woman I ever knew.

Plus she reigned over the Happy Hours with her classic martini's Right up to the very last one.

I am pretty lost all of a sudden knowing she is gone. But to such a better place right now!! Her faith was Always strong and i know she Is living the rewards now.

Jenny “Scott” Jecmen - July 19 at 04:40 PM

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“ I met Sue twenty five years ago at Evergreen Presbyterian. You could tell she was someone you wanted to know. She radiated intelligence, inclusiveness, love and fun. Sue encouraged me in my work, and was along for the Overton Park film, the Delta Symposium, and Park Friends. She made every project better by bringing her unique views, backed by understanding and grace. I will miss my friend.

Willy Bearden - July 19 at 08:31 AM

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“ What a gracious, delightful, fun person was Sue. She kept you on your toes with her kindness and wit and may she rest in the peace she deserves. Cheers!!!!!!!!!!

**A.W. Simmons** - July 18 at 07:50 PM

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“ I cannot begin to compete, nor would I endeavor to try, with Janis' memory, but to add, whether you were a guest in her home or on her front porch or at a neighborhood meeting, Sue made you feel welcome and respected. My last memories of Sue was our visit to her home last December to sing Christmas carols. Though not as spry as she once was, that wonderful smile was as bright as ever. So is/was loved by this neighborhood and its association and she loved us right back. To have known Sue was to know graciousness and greatness. She will now join her beloved Robert and her great good friend Irma and heaven will be a better place. I picture her now sipping that afternoon martini. John D. and Marion M. Jones.

**John D. Jones** - July 18 at 12:48 PM

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“ Sue was my across the street neighbor on Stonewall for many years. I was a very young mother of a 9-month old when I arrived on Stonewall, and Sue welcomed me as the first friendly neighbor from our street with a plate of beautiful summer tomatoes. We became friends as I began to regularly trek across the street for visits.

One of my earliest memories was crossing the street early one morning in my bathrobe after I stepped out on the porch to put some "to be mailed" letters in my mailbox and my big front door closed behind me, locking me outside when my toddler was still inside in his playpen. Sue graciously let me in without comment or raised eyebrow about my scanty summer robe and let me use her telephone to call my husband to come home and let me in. I was horrified by the experience, and so very thankful to her for her gracious hospitality.

Those first visits were so special. Sue had a magical box of toys stowed away in her home that she pulled out to entertain my babies. She loved seeing what they selected from the box and how they played, all the while feeding me with the witty adult conversation that I craved and her amazing southern charm. I came to think of her as the Auntie Mame for my three children, a sort of substitute for the aunts and grandparents I lived near when I was a child - the quite eccentric and wonderfully artistic aunt I didn't have, but would have so welcomed in those early years.

Somewhere in those years, mixed in with learning from her about the art of hosting and the importance of a beautifully set table, Sue and I became Evergreen neighborhood partners and co-conspirators - intent on shepherding the Evergreen neighborhood back from the bleak days when houses were being taken and demolished for the proposed I-40 highway construction to neighborhood wholeness and vitality. Sue was my companion when I trekked to Nashville in 1985 to represent the neighborhood in our quest for national register status - a time when I was at least 7 months pregnant (and quite gigantic) with my third child. We used the stained glass window on her stair landing as the inspiration for the logo for the new Evergreen Historic District Association. Her home was the landing place for the annual Christmas post-caroling party - a party that I think of now as so essential to binding the neighborhood together in those early days. A bit later, I remember how her instruction to a group of neighborhood leaders from around the United States on how to say Memphis - in three syllables, not two - was the energy that brought more than 800 people to Memphis for the 1990 Neighborhoods USA conference.

I can say so much more about what I learned from Sue - what I learned about how to be taken seriously (Janis, never wear that brown suit again when you are presenting - you need some color), to what to do when hurtful conflict arises (and we did have some of that, but moved through it), to the importance of family and tradition (this dining room was built for this buffet), to how one ages gracefully (and we all know that she was good at that). I am so thankful for Sue. She was a super-human force in my life, and I know that I'm not alone in that

Rest in peace, Sue. And may you find a table in your new home that is beautiful adorned with a martini at each place. Thank you for the abundance you brought to my life and the lives of my my children. Forever grateful.

Janis Foster Richardson - July 17 at 09:47 PM