

Sarah Land

by Joe Aliskaus, husband

Sarah went from Vassar to graduate school at the University of Chicago, studying information science and business, but she left after one year to take a job with the Chicago Transit Authority as a computer programmer. Programming would turn out to be her calling, but there were twists and turns along the way.

We met in 1977. I was a Chicago police officer. On our second date she beat me at racquetball. I was intrigued by her beauty, her southern accent, her wonderful smile.

After we married and our children (John, 29 and Ruth, 27 as of March 2008) were born, we moved to Roanoke, Virginia, where Sarah's searching exposed her diverse interests and many talents. She took a courier job at a law office; earned paralegal certification; passed the LSAT; got a private investigator's license; was games director for Virginia Amateur Sports. But as web developer/database analyst at Roanoke College she found work she loved from beginning to retirement in July 2006.

Sarah was a commanding presence at home: a stickler for proper grammar, diction, table etiquette, and all things mannerly. She was never shy about correcting the family.

We enjoyed hiking together. Sarah found a new appreciation for flowers and birds and studied these creatures with the same vigorous enthusiasm she brought to all her pursuits. She had hoped to paint and draw after retiring; unknown to most of her friends, Sarah was a talented artist.

Whatever Sarah undertook she had to master. I admired her pursuit of a goal. The French philosopher Michel de Montaigne, who viewed preparation for death a way of life, wrote, "the utility of living consists not in length of days but in the use of time; a man may have lived long, and lived but little." I think Sarah would have agreed with that thought.