



Barbara Knowlton Gustavson

November 28, 1954 - May 8, 2020

BARBARA ANN KNOWLTON GUSTAVSON, 65, of Woodstock, Virginia, died peacefully in her sleep at home on May 8, 2020, after living life to her fullest following a diagnosis of inflammatory breast cancer in October of 2016.

Barbara was born in New Jersey on November 28, 1954. She was the second of three children. She met her husband, Dr. Steven Allen Gustavson, of Chatham, New Jersey, in her senior year of high school. Barbara graduated from Madison High School in 1972. She was an active member of the band, orchestra, twirling and musicals. She graduated from Rutgers - Douglass College in 1976, with a B.A. in Education/Mathematics. She also continued her passion in the Rutgers band. She married Steve on November 27, 1976 after her college graduation. Barbara began her professional career teaching high school Mathematics in New Jersey, Arkansas, Maryland, and Texas. She spent the majority of her professional career at Westat Research Corporation, where she advanced to the position of Associate Director. Upon their retirement, Barbara and Steve moved to Woodstock, Virginia. Barbara loved being with her family, as well as playing card games and reading. She and Steve were avid dancers in Couples Country Western and West Coast Swing. Since 2009, they were active members of a West Coast Swing competitive dance team. Barbara is survived by her husband, Steve, of Woodstock, Virginia; her daughters, Laura Caton and Kristen Zalenski, both of Stephens City, Virginia; her grandchildren Jackson Zalenski, Brianna Zalenski, and Riley Caton, all of Stephens City, Virginia; her siblings, William Knowlton and Jill

Wince, both of Henrietta, Texas; her sons-in-law Nicholas Caton and Gregory Zalenski, both of Stephens City, Virginia; her sister-in-law, Julia Knowlton, of Henrietta, Texas; her brother-in-law, Aaron Wince, of Henrietta, Texas; her nieces, Diane Knowlton, of Henrietta, Texas and Andrea Knowlton, of Austin, Texas; and her nephew, Robert Wince, of Henrietta, Texas. She is predeceased by her father, Robert Ellsworth Knowlton (1921 - 1983) and her mother, Nadine Joyce Fischer Knowlton (1923 - 2011). Barbara was a beautiful, strong, smart, warm, and loving woman, who was compassionate towards others. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her. A life celebration will be held at a later date due to the pandemic. In lieu of flowers, the family asks donations to be made to IBC Network Foundation, P.O. Box 908 Friendswood, Texas 77546 or Blue Rudge Hospice, 333 W. Cork St #405 Winchester, VA 22601. Events Details are pending.

Tribute Wall

JH

“ My sympathy to all of Barbara's family. May your memories of a happy life together help you at this time of loss. Regrettably I never expressed my appreciation of her service to Westat and her contribution to our important Medial Expenditures project while she was with us.. But it remains a memory for all of us. Sincerely. Joe Hunt

Joe Hunt - May 19, 2020 at 12:00 AM

CH

“ I'm saddened to hear of Barb's passing. I have known her since we were teenagers when her dad brought his family down to Texas one summer (our dads were law professors) and we instantly became friends. While I was a college student in Washington DC, I went up visiting her in NJ during my breaks and we've kept our friendships ever since. She was beautiful, inside and out ... she will be always in my fond memories. My heartfelt sympathy goes out to the Gustavsons and Knowltons. Claudia Horner Hoersten

Claudia Horner Hoersten - May 19, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ St George Island Feb 2019

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ St. Augustine Distillery 2018

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PM

“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*

Pamela Mettley - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

RR

“ *It is truly a blessing to have known Barbara. She always demonstrated peace and happiness. I admired that. I will miss catching up and hearing about her travels and her grandchildren. My prayers to Steve and the family. Rhonda Rice*

Rhonda Rice - May 14, 2020 at 12:00 AM

“ I loved Barbara Knowlton Gustavson. I loved her as a friend. A real friend. One who could teach me something. I didn't know Barbara long. Long enough to know she was real, in love with her husband, daughters and grandchildren and in love with life, a life that was taken from her prematurely. We meet new people every day. Like ships that pass in the night, some of them pass us in the opposite direction, with hardly a wave of recognition between us. Others pass us at right angles with names we can't remember two weeks later. Many people join us for a short time, our paths merge briefly and then drift slowly away. Still others bump into us, and then sail over the horizon, out of sight and mind until they bump into us again many years later. The best parallel our course, closely or near enough, that they aren't out of sight. It is from these that I form my finest memories. Barbara was one of these. Whenever I meet someone like Barbara, I ask myself some important questions. The first is why. Why is this person in my life? Later comes, what do I offer her? What does she offer me? What can she teach me? What can I learn from her that will make me a better person? Some of the things I've learned from people like Barbara are charity, humility, honesty, compassion, service and a lust for life. With Barbara, it was courage. Our paths paralleled each other and we both knew we wouldn't drift apart. There wouldn't be time. It would terminate suddenly, but not without notice. We both knew it was coming, sooner rather than later and we, especially Barbara, knew it would be okay. Barbara faced her fate with courage. Many of you might have viewed Barbara as brave as she went about her days, knowing they were numbered but not knowing how many there would be. Bravery is an event. It happens suddenly and without thought. You might pass a burning house and run inside to rescue a child, grandmother or pet. You might witness an accident and rush to help a trapped passenger escape or crawl out on a frozen lake to rescue a fawn trapped in the ice. You would do all of these without conscious thought, without consideration of the potential consequences. Witnesses would describe you as brave. Courage is different. Courageous people might rush into a burning house, knowing it might collapse on them, they might not find anyone or

anything to rescue or succumb to heavy smoke. They know they might die in the process and they do it anyway. They approach a wreck knowing the person might be beyond help, they might fight them in a panic or the car might catch fire and explode and they might die and they do it anyway. They crawl out on ice too thin to support a fawn knowing the ice might crack and they might die and they do it anyway because it is the right thing to do. To witnesses it looks like bravery but it's actually courage. Barbara faced each day with courage. She knew the consequences of living. She woke up each day, determined to live it, knowing each day was one day closer to the inevitable. She had good days and bad days. Some of you experienced each of them. I only saw the good days. I don't know if she saved them for me or I, somehow, contributed to the good ones. It doesn't matter which. I'm good with either. The Barbara I knew lived each day. Waking up each day was infinitely more important to her than it was to me. Like some others, she could have given up and embraced her fate. She chose to live each day and get all she could. She fought to live and she mustered the courage to make it happen. That's the Barbara Knowlton Gustavson I knew. That's the Barbara Knowlton Gustavson I'll remember, alive and courageous.

Russell Dobbins - May 13, 2020 at 12:00 AM

SN

“ *We always enjoyed our dance classes with Barbara and Steve, who were such smooth West Coast swingers. We watched them on the floor at Dance Club Shenandoah and saw the love they shared for dance and for each other.*

Steve and Ellen Nichols - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

BL

“ We only had the privilege of knowing Barbara and her husband, Steve, for a couple of years, having met them through ballroom dance. Barbara was the sweetest lady. We have fond memories of the meals that we shared together, cooked at our house, cooked outside on the Gustavson's barbeque grill, and at restaurants. We always enjoyed being in their company. It is with great sadness that I read of Barbara's passing. I know that she struggled with her health, but she was a brave fighter, She will be greatly missed. Our deepest condolences to Steve and the rest of her family. This is a great loss. A great lady has passed and left us all in sorrow.

Bonnie L. Lane - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

AI

“ We send caring thoughts to Steve and all Barbara's family. My husband, Bruce Shull, and I admired so much about this magnificent woman- her spirit, her intelligence, her skills, and her dancing. We always enjoyed her at Dance Club Shenandoah and at the west coast swing events.

Alice Irvan - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

GL

“ What a beautiful photo of Barbara! I worked with her at Westat and we both had our original breast cancers at the same time. She was one of the driving forces behind the Westat Cancer Support Group which helped a lot of people. We kept up our friendship even after we retired. She was a lovely person, inside and out; intelligent, funny, loyal, caring and kind. I only wish I had known her longer. She was truly an amazing, one in a million, woman. I called her my SHERO, because she was such an inspiration to me. Wonder Woman!! Gloria Loudermilk

Gloria J loudermilk - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ Steve, you have my sincere sympathy .I truly cherish all the memories of Barb, Jack and you and I on the dance floor all over the place. It was a fun time for all of us.I wish we four could meet today at the Cantina as we did in the past.Sincerely with love,
Beverly Shoemaker

Beverly Shoemkaer - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

RP

“ I'm deeply saddened to hear this. Barbara was always very sweet. She always had that great smile, never a harsh word. She was beautiful inside and out. My heartfelt sympathy to her family. She was truly one of the good ones. Rest with God sweet lady. You will be missed. Much love, Rocco Passomato, MHS,'73

Rocco Passomato - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PD

“ My prayers are with Barbara's family. I have fond memories of performing with her in the MHS music department. Barbara was a talented and generous musician who was always willing to help anyone who asked. She sang like an angel and now she is one. Fondly, Pat Dobbs Diamond (class of ~72)

Pat Diamond - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

NM

“ Max and Nancy Morris have many fond memories of Barb and Steve we have been friends since the 90s when we all took dance lessons in Walkersville Maryland. We played many cards games, attended many dances and weddings. We even went on vacations together. We rented sailboats , catamarans & airplanes to vacation together. Barb will be very missed She's had a long fight but always was positive She was determined to have her girls married and mothers before she could leave them. How she adored and bragged about her grandchildren. I hope they will be reminded of her love in their future. Steve, you and the girls unselfishly cared for Barb for these many years and we thank you. Love always. The Morris Family

Nancy morris - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

KG

“ dearest Steve & family,Our thoughts are with you during this difficult time.In memories we find comfort. In time we find Peace.Barbara was kind, warm, generous, always sentcards to others in pain & did so much for others.She will be missed.Love,Karen & Joe Gutierrez

KAREN GUTIERREZ - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

RL

“ Danced with Barb and Steve for a long time with The Frederick Country and Western Dance Assoc. Both were great people and she will be missed by a lot of us, prayers for Steve and the families,



Ronald Lowe - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

GP

“ Barbara and Steve raised two wonderful young women. I've known the family since the girls were in elementary school, then later at the CW dances in the Walkersville fire hall. I remember how much fun they had as a family and how lovely Steve and Barbara looked as they two-stepped around the floor! Holding the family in the light....

Gail Padgett - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

TT

“ I got to know the Knowlton family through her brother Bill. We were both involved in the music program at MHS. I first met Barbara during the summer production of "Oliver!". I was one of the older cast members. Barbara was beginning eighth grade and even at that young age, had an impressive voice and stage presence. She gave a captivating performance as the Rose Seller. As years progressed, I watched her in numerous school and summer shows as she performed some difficult leading roles. Barbara always had a smile on her face and a kind and caring demeanor. The Knowltons were the epitome of everything that a Madison family represented. My deepest sympathies to her family. Tom Tyler MHS '67

Thomas N Tyler - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

BH

“ From my perspective as a teammate of hers on DC Capital Swing, Barb displayed admirable grace and resolve through the course of her illness and treatment. She maintained a cheerful disposition even when she was sometimes unable to dance or persist through a team practice. I will always remember her determination at Liberty Swing to compete despite feeling weak and enervated. While we expected that she might need to drop out of the performance, she danced through to the end, a triumph that marked a core strength in her personality that I am sure many of you knew so well.

Bill Hopkins - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

DZ

“ So sorry to hear of your loss. She was taken too soon. I remember her smile and how proud she was to be a member of our twirling team in high school. There were many a cold football game that we all froze but that smile was always there. She always stood tall and enjoyed it. My prayers are with you during this sad time. Diane Zsombik (Tauber class of 71')

Diane C Zsombik - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

KB

“ In honor of Barbara's daughter Kristen, a true friend to me for nearly a decade. Barbara lives on in her children.

Kelley Bodell - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

CG

“ In have fond memories of dancing with Barbara and Steve at country and swing dances. I know she fought hard to stay with her friends and family.

Carol gregoire - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ I have many happy memories over the years of Barbara on the dance team, at dance events and social dancing. Barbara was always such a loving, gentle soul. I will always miss her and treasure my memories of her. I know she is dancing with the angels in heaven.

Linda Bogard - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

DD

“ I will miss a good friend, band member and stage partner. We only just recently reconnected on FB. She will be missed but not forgotten...always in my memories. My condolences to Barb's family. Dale Doller Class of 1970 MHS.

Dale Doller - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM