

Susan Little Hodgson, born July 7, 1941, died at age 82 on July 31, 2023, from complications of sepsis.



Sue played french horn in high school and in the Kilty Band at Alma College in Michigan, from which she graduated. She then put her horn aside for many years as priorities changed. Motherhood meant raising two children and her work left little time for music. She taught elementary school in several Marin County school districts and then, after earning a Masters Degree in Special Education from Dominican University, became a Education Resource Specialist.

In retirement Sue picked up her horn once again. She took lessons from Alicia Telford and for almost twenty years was first horn in the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Non-Marching Band, better known as the Sewer Band. For sixteen years Sue was first horn in the Oakland Community Orchestra where she for many years as well was Secretary of the orchestra's Advisory Board.

Sue played in the Corte Madera Town band for years and she often played in weekend chamber workshops run by the Chamber Musicians of Northern California, week-long chamber and brass workshops at CSU Humboldt and in Ashland Oregon, and eight-week-long chamber groups at the Crowden Adult School in Berkeley. Sue often went to summer week-long Kendall Betts horn camp in New Hampshire. She also played briefly in the College of Marin band and orchestra, the City College of San Francisco orchestra and the Mill Valley Philharmonic. She attended several annual conferences of the International Horn Society, both here and abroad.



Sue played in numerous informal small groups: many woodwind quintets in Sue Crum's living room and numerous horn quartets in her living room and the homes of other horn players in Marin and Alameda Counties.

In her driveway during the Covid pandemic Sue put on fifty weekly Sunday afternoon concerts, mostly trios but occasionally quartets and quintets. Her neighbors regularly came to listen and delight in the music.

And Sue instituted music coaching at Miller Creek Middle School, not only coaching student horn players herself (and occasionally lending them horns), but recruiting players from the Sewer Band to coach other instruments and other students.

Sue listened to a lot of music: dress rehearsals and concerts at the SF Symphony and concerts of the SF Chamber Orchestra, Marin Symphony, Mill Valley Philharmonic, SF Opera and West Edge Opera, and any number of performances by smaller groups in smaller venues in Marin County as well as an occasional Broadway musical. She was drawn on her travels to sites with memorable concerts like that in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw to hear in one evening the Romeo and Juliet's of Tchaikovsky, Berlioz, Prokofiev and Bernstein's West Side Story. Museums, especially music museums were of great interest to Sue, as this picture attests, taken at the Cité de la Musique in Paris.



Everyone who met her, played with her, or listened to her was charmed not only by her skill and musicianship but by her friendliness, enthusiasm and grace. With and without her horn she formed many deep and long-lasting friendships.

A full, more formal, obituary follows.

Susan L. Hodgson

July 20, 1941 - July 31, 2023

Sue Hodgson, a San Rafael resident and retired Marin County educator, passed away from complications of a septic infection on Monday, July 31, 2023, at age 82, surrounded by her loved ones.

Born in Detroit, Michigan to Sheldon Grant Little and Marybeth Little, Sue was raised in Rocky River, Ohio and Birmingham, Michigan. She graduated from Birmingham High School in 1959 and earned her Bachelor of Arts in Education at Alma College in 1963. Sue moved from Michigan to California later in 1963 to pursue her love of teaching. She married Clive Hodgson in 1966 and they raised two children, Craig and Jennifer, at their home in Forest Knolls in the San Geronimo Valley.



Sue taught a generation of local public schoolchildren at Inverness Elementary School and then at West Marin Elementary School in the Shoreline Unified School District during the 1970s and into the 1990s first as a classroom teacher and then as a resource specialist after earning her Master's degree in Special Education from Dominican University of California in 1985. As the district's California Teachers Association union president, Sue led the Shoreline teachers on a successful labor strike in 1986 to ensure that her fellow educators were being fairly compensated during budget cutbacks. In the early 1990s, she transferred her teaching skills to become a resource specialist at Vallecito Elementary School in what is now the Miller Creek School District in San Rafael. She educated children in that district until her retirement in 2003 and then continued to volunteer with music coaching and tutoring in that community in her retirement.

In addition to her full-time career as an educator, Sue was the definition of a dedicated community volunteer and supportive mother and grandmother. She volunteered with youth education programs, served as a docent at the California Academy of Sciences, campaigned for local political causes, coached youth soccer, participated in Girl Scouting and Cub Scouts, served in leadership roles at her churches, and spent years attending local baseball and soccer games, swim meets, and other afterschool activities with her kids and grandkids.

After her retirement, Sue enjoyed attending to her beautiful garden and she renewed her lifelong interest in playing music. She became an accomplished French Horn player. She played in the Las Gallinas Valley Sanitary District Non-Marching Band "The Sewer Band" for nearly 20 years, played with several other local bands including the Corte Madera Town Band and the Oakland Community Orchestra, and attended French Horn music camps and workshops every summer with her musical friends. She was a member of the International Horn Society and attended annual conferences both in the United States and abroad. She also volunteered weekly with Miller Creek Middle School and organized a music mentoring and coaching program wherein she recruited band member volunteers to help coach students during music classes at the school. During the recent Covid pandemic, Sue organized and presented a series of 50 weekly Sunday afternoon concerts in her driveway to the delight of her neighbors. Sue was also a talented vocalist. She sang in the church choirs at the San Geronimo Community Presbyterian Church and later at Marin Covenant Church in San Rafael.

The oldest of four siblings, Sue is survived by her brother Jim Little (Cheryl) of East Lansing, Michigan, brother John Little of Charlotte, Michigan, sister Betsy Little (Paul) of Marquette, Michigan, and many beloved cousins, nieces and nephews. Locally, she is survived by her children Craig Hodgson (Jennifer) of San Rafael, Jennifer Louise Hodgson of Costa Mesa, California, and her beloved partner of sixteen years, Bennett Price of Oakland, California with whom she shared mutual interests in music and travel. She also left behind two precious grandchildren in Benjamin and Hannah Hodgson whom she loved to babysit, and to whom "GrammaSue" passed on a passion for education, music, laughter, and the importance of family.

There will be a memorial service and celebration of Sue's life on Saturday, October 7, 2023, at 1pm at First Presbyterian Church, San Rafael. Anyone who knew Sue is invited to come share memories and listen to her favorite musical pieces played by a few of her cherished musician friends. In lieu of flowers, please consider donations to: The Susan Hodgson Music Education Memorial Fund c/o Miller Creek School District, 380 Nova Albion Way, San Rafael, CA 94903 – the proceeds of which will be dedicated to supporting music education in local public schools. A link to the fund is here: <https://bit.ly/3sjRN0w>