

Her Name Is Janet  
by Susan Handle Terbey

Janet and I had met briefly on the playground on the first day of school for our daughters. It was my oldest daughter's first day of school and her youngest and only daughter's first day of school. We both were standing watching our little ones who were getting in line to go into the building. We started to talk and eventually introduced our daughters to each other as well. It became a friendship that lasted years for our daughters and later for us as well.

Off and on we encountered each other at parent/teacher meetings. It wasn't until a few years later we became re-acquainted through our work in the St. Vincent De Paul Society. She became one of my best friends. We had the best time delivering food to those in our community who needed assistance. She always drove – and she also never liked to turn left so what normally would take someone a few minutes to get to a destination, it would take us perhaps an hour or so. We laughed, we joked, and we just had fun together. So often when I would call her, she would say, 'Sue, can't you see I'm busy?' I'd respond by stating, 'uh, no – I can't see through the phone!' She always made me laugh.

Unfortunately, Janet also was fighting cancer, the same kind of cancer that took my mother's life when I was a young girl. After months of remission the disease came back with full fury. I remember her phone call when she told me she had to face chemo sessions again. She cried; I cried. And yet, through her tears she never pitied herself, she often supported others as they too were facing chemo. Her heart was so great; her humor so immeasurable; her love so unconditional. In the evenings she was an on-call nurse at a local nursing home. Oftentimes she would sit and hold the hand of one of the residents – just to let them know someone cared about them, that they were never alone when she was on duty.

One Christmas she called me to say that she was going home to Indiana to be with her family. I told her I was worried about her health and the traveling involved but she reassured me that she would be fine and I would see her after the holidays. Her call stirred memories of my mother leaving the home because she was so sick and my concern about seeing her again. Now I had the same feelings of concern about seeing Janet again.

While visiting her family, Janet's condition grew worse and I learned that she had been admitted to the hospital. The cancer was spreading rapidly and she was placed on life support. The family, in consultation with the doctors, had to make the horrible decision to remove the life support system and let Janet go. Because my pastor knew of my close friendship with Janet, I received a call from my parish rectory on January 2; my 36<sup>th</sup> birthday to tell me Janet had died that same day. My best friend was gone. I cried in disbelief.

At her funeral her husband came up to me and gave me a big hug and with a smile, said, 'Sue, can't you see I'm busy?' and we both broke down in tears.

There will never be a book written about Janet or her life but her life touched so many people, helped write so many stories, and helped form so many tapestries. I am blessed to have called her friend.

Susan Handle Terbay  
[www.susandhandle.com](http://www.susandhandle.com)  
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