

A Tribute to Martie Sucec

*By Laura Herbst
Photos by Tim Lipman*



Grief reverberated through Multnomah on April 23 as news spread that beloved and fearless neighborhood leader Martie Sucec had passed away from cancer. She was 76.

Her zeal for her neighborhood, with its quirky and crooked village center, its meandering tree-lined streets, its older bungalows and ranch homes, and its people with strong working class roots, was unmatched. She led the people's struggle to stand up to the city's continual schemes to redevelop and modernize, to turn Multnomah into a place where the people who lived there could no longer afford it.

"My favorite memory of Martie is how bold she was, how she would say things we were all thinking but wouldn't say," said Maria Thi Mai, friend and chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association. Certainly her posture of leaning forward as she took long strides was one of someone who faces challenges fearlessly.

Involved more than 30 years ago in the creation of the Southwest Community Plan, she worked to incorporate the voices of residents, to save trees and gardens that are among the most beautiful in the city, and to tailor commercial development to the historic character of the village. She had been chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association and was vice-chair the day she died.

She is best-known for her most recent work organizing a law suit against the city of Portland for outlawing single family neighborhoods through the Middle Housing Policy and the Residential Infill Project. That law suit is ongoing and currently before the Oregon Court of Appeals.

She met her long-time partner, Wendy Morseth, 40 years ago in Mosier, Ore. At the time Martie was penniless, trying to complete a novel, and arrived with two coats on, a rain coat over another coat. It was an extremely cold February day in the Gorge, and Martie was from San Diego. She had questions to ask about the phenomenon of freezing. "Here she arrived, this crumpled, frozen, disheveled person, and what I noticed was her depth," Wendy recalled.

Her infamous voice and her erudite wordsmithing, whether fighting the city's attempts to disempower its own people, or just trying to get to know the person before her, was a favorite part of the Multnomah neighborhood scene. For many years she worked as an

editor for the Center for Health Research in Portland, and she was known for her technical and literary skills in editing manuscripts and mentoring younger writers. Emma Dugan of Multnomah’s tree team will miss the conversations. “We had such deep, wonderful talks,” Emma said. “There’s only one tree that could be planted in her honor,” she said. “A giant sequoia.”



Martie and Ole at Gabriel Park, Sept 2004

A potluck picnic celebrating her life will begin at 3pm, Sunday, June 16 in Gabriel Park’s picnic area E. In lieu of flowers, donations in Martie’s memory can be sent to the Multnomah Neighborhood Association legal fund to continue the efforts to preserve what’s beautiful about Multnomah.

To make a tax-deductible donation, go to <https://swni.org/Multnomah> or by check payable to Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc., (SWNI) and in the memo line write: *Multnomah Land Use Fund*. Mail it to or drop it off at: SWNI, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy, Room 5, Portland, OR 97219.

“I wish you joy in the things that are fashioned for joy, and an honest sorrow in what is of its nature sorrowful—joy and sorrow, each is beautiful and beautiful the heart’s understanding of them.” By Kenneth Patchen and included in Martie’s Canine Reflections 2018