



## Mary Sue Butler

April 18, 1946 - December 31, 2025

Mary Sue Challas Butler, of Duluth, Minnesota, died on December 31, 2025, surrounded by love. She was a force of nature whose absence will be felt immeasurably.

Mary Sue was born on April 18, 1946, in Spirit Lake, Iowa to Mary and Jim Challas- the first of their five children. Her family moved several times while she was growing up, to which she attributed her ease of making friends and her selective southern drawl.

She met her husband, Ken, at the University of Minnesota where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in psychology. She went on to attend graduate school there and regularly spoke of her days living in the "bowery" where her favorite uncle was her landlord, and working in a box factory to pay her tuition.

After graduating, Mary Sue worked for many years as a therapist at the Human Development Center in Duluth, MN, and later as a consultant for Life House Duluth. She was passionate about helping people with mental illness and was very proud of her work doing street outreach for the CHUM homeless center and her contribution to Duluth's Community Court.

Mary Sue had two children, Joseph (Tammie McDonald) Butler, and Molly

(Cooper) Hanning, in whom she worked hard to cultivate an equal concern for those marginalized or overlooked. It was most important to Mary Sue that her children were kind, and she modeled the importance of showing up when people were down. She also modeled how to be playful and stay glamorous to her three grandchildren Gus, Maida, and Jack Hanning. She proclaimed herself "Glamma", and dressed the part- bold glasses, bracelets, baubles, and lots of turquoise. She relished racing her grandbabies with her walker and sharing her love of ice-cream bars. Throughout her life, Mary Sue also tended to many standard poodles- the last of which she taught to dance.

When Mary Sue was not in Duluth, she was sharing a drink and a laugh with friends that became family at her beloved cabin on Lake Dodo, or enjoying winter in Puerto Vallarta as the self-proclaimed "luckiest woman in the world" for the opportunity to do so.

Mary Sue also did hard things and often reassured others that hard things get easier. She traveled across Europe by herself in her twenties and learned to downhill ski in her forties. Her last two years were incredibly challenging in many ways, but nothing broke her spirit. She was incredibly grateful to Linnae Nelson-Seys for helping to make that happen.

Along with her children and grandchildren, Mary Sue is survived by her siblings-Ann Adams, Jim Challas, Carol Challas, and John Challas-and many loyal friends. Her husband and parents preceded her in death.

In lieu of flowers, please enjoy a dark chocolate dove bar or consider a donation to Life House Duluth, Grace Hospice, or Animal Allies in Duluth.

**FUNERAL:** Mass of Christian Burial on January 9, 2025, at 11:00 AM in Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church, 701 Fillmore St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413.



# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 9. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church  
701 Fillmore Street Northeast  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

## Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 9. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church  
701 Fillmore Street Northeast  
Minneapolis, MN 55413

# Tribute Wall

EC

“*Mary Sue entered my life -- with energy and flare -- when I was about 15 years old, as both my mom's colleague and the mother of my soon-to-be best friend. For the next ~5 years, she was a regular fixture in my life, whether driving us around in her Landcruiser, cultivating fun times at the cabin, or regaling us with tales of her youth (which somehow always included mention of her Phi Beta Kappa status :)). While I will hold on to these memories from my formative years, I am most grateful to Mary Sue (and Gig) for giving me my best friend, Molly, who continues to enrich my life every day and through whom their spirits live on. May you rest in peace, power, and glamor Mary Sue! <3*

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**Emily Cook-Lundgren** - January 09 at 07:33 AM



“*Sweet Sincerity was purchased for the family of Mary Sue Butler.*



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January 07 at 10:44 PM



“*Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Sue Butler.*



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January 06 at 03:18 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Sue Butler.*



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January 06 at 12:41 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mary Sue Butler.*



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January 05 at 09:26 AM



“ *Molly's Travelers Team (CL&LSS) purchased the Pink Tribute Spray for the family of Mary Sue Butler.*



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**Molly's Travelers Team (CL&LSS)** - January 04 at 09:47 PM



“ *Jerry Paquin planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Sue Butler.*

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**Jerry Paquin** - January 04 at 01:06 PM

JP

“ Jerry Paquin purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Mary Sue Butler.



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**Jerry Paquin** - January 04 at 01:06 PM

JH

“ Thanks for 50 years of friendship Mary You will always be in my heart.

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**julie heilman** - January 03 at 04:06 PM

LD

“ Linda Donaldson planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Sue Butler.

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**Linda Donaldson** - January 03 at 10:52 AM

LD

“ Linda Donaldson purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Mary Sue Butler.



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**Linda Donaldson** - January 03 at 10:52 AM

AF

“ So much has gone with Mary's death —laughter, joy, strength but the compassion is what will be missed the most! Rest easy friend.

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**Alana Friedman** - January 03 at 06:15 AM

LN

“ This space is too small to adequately share a Mary Sue story but I would like to thank her for welcoming me into her adventures and variety-filled social life. We had a lot of fun together!

*I loved it when I would pose a two-part question to Mary Sue and she would smile and wryly answer "Yes, and yes." Turquoise is also my favorite color, but in this house it will forevermore be called "Mary Sue Blue." Rest in peace; I sure love you.*



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**Linnae Nelson-Seys** - January 02 at 10:47 PM

MB

*MarySue smiled, relaxed, and enthusiastically told me of her wonderful days at the cabin when we talked in 2025. I stayed at the Meir Duluth home often before Grandmas Marathons. She, Gig and Molly welcomed friends of all ages. Michael Baker*

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**Michael F. Baker** - January 04 at 12:15 PM

FT

“ Frank Towers purchased the Simply Elegant Spat hiphyllum for the family of Mary Sue Butler.



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**Frank Towers** - January 02 at 08:46 PM

JR

“ So sorry for your loss. Met her a few years back at Ken's funeral. May she Rest in peace.

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**John Ruth** - January 02 at 08:44 PM

FT

“ *I’m so sorry for your loss. My thoughts and prayers for the family.* ”

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**Frank Towers** - January 02 at 08:34 PM



“ *Thank you for going out of your way to help me. Your support truly brightened my days and made all the difference! I will miss you my friend, and will sing you song in honor of your memory.* ”

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**Gabriel Mayfield** - January 02 at 06:02 PM