



## Joni Roberts

June 23, 1957 - April 12, 2016

Joni Roberts, 58

Joan M. Hensel (Joni) Roberts died Tuesday, April 12, in the Huntsville Hospital. She was 58. Her death came at the end of a 10-month battle with lung cancer after being diagnosed the day before her birthday last June.

Mrs. Roberts was a devoted employee of the Marshall County Health Department. Determined to get in her full 25 years working there, she could be found working at her desk as late as last Wednesday (April 6) even though she had been on oxygen continuously since March 28. After a treatment at CCI last Thursday (April 7), her oxygen level dipped to an extremely dangerous level and she was rushed to Huntsville Hospital with acute hypoxia. Her health continued to degenerate until her passing on Tuesday.

She was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan. As a member of a military family, Mrs. Roberts lived in Argentina as a toddler and graduated from high school in Frankfort, Germany. The family established roots in Kendall, Florida, as her father transitioned into a career with the FAA.

Mrs. Roberts was working in the avionics field when she relocated to the Atlanta area. It was there she met her husband, Guntersville native Tom Roberts, who was the public relations director at Atlanta International

Raceway at the time. Tom moved on to be the assistant general manager of the Nashville International Raceway and the couple were married in 1981 in Nolensville, Tennessee. While living in Nashville, Mrs. Roberts took an entry level position with the Metro Nashville Police Department (MNPD) and rose to the rank of Senior Latent Print Examiner.

The couple bought a weekend cabin at Pine Island Point and moved there to live in 1989 as Tom was now traveling on the top level NASCAR circuit working with drivers, teams and sponsors. After serving as hospitality director for driver Alan Kulwicki's team for a few seasons, Mrs. Roberts was tired of the road and eventually landed her position at the health department.

In 1992, the couple sold their place on Pine Island Point and moved to their home on Wyeth Drive, where she resided at the time of her death.

For several years as a hobby, Mrs. Roberts honed her skills in the stained glass and glass etching craft, winning several awards. Her work can still be found around Gunter'sville today, such as on doors inside St. William Catholic Church.

With Tom's job keeping him on the road so much, the couple decided against ever having children early in their marriage. Mrs. Roberts' "kids" came in the form of pets of all shapes and sizes. At one time, her "zoo crew" consisted of five parrots, four dogs and a cat.

Although she never had any children of her own, Mrs. Roberts was known for her mothering instinct and was considered as Godmother to several children who grew up in the area.

Always an outgoing person, she took up stand up paddle boarding just as it was becoming popular. She could be seen on a regular basis out on the lake

with her beloved Brussels Griffon (MaiTai) riding on the front of her board even after being diagnosed with cancer.

The couple kept a boat at the Val Monte Marina and cherished the friendships they made with the marina crowd. Through her husband, a University of Alabama graduate, Mrs. Roberts became a staunch supporter of Crimson Tide athletics and attended three of the last four national championship games.

Survivors include her husband of 34 years, Tom, brother Bernie Hensel (Melba), sisters Susan Hensel-Henry (Silas), Cari Maiorino (Anthony) Patricia Leisner (Anthony), several nieces and nephews, and constant canine companion MaiTai. She was preceded in death by her parents, Frank A. and Mary Jean Hensel.

A memorial service for Mrs. Roberts was held on Friday in the chapel at Carr Funeral Home. Father Dale Grubba, who presided in the funeral services of Kulwicki, Davey Allison and others in the racing community, officiated.

There was no interment as her body was cremated with her ashes to be spread along her paddle board route on the Big Spring Creek area of Lake Guntersville. In lieu of flowers, the family requested that donations be made to the American Cancer Society or the Second Chance Shelter at 130 County Road 398, Boaz, AL 35957.

The family wishes to publicly express their thanks to Dr. John Waples, Dr. Jason Smith and the staffs of Clearview Cancer Institute, Huntsville Lung Associates, Center for Cancer Care and Huntsville Hospital for helping Mrs. Roberts fight her battle.

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# Previous Events

## Visitation

APR 15. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Carr Funeral Home  
1960 O'Brig Avenue  
Guntersville, AL 35976  
(256) 582-3411

## Memorial Service

APR 15. 11:00 AM (CT)

Carr Funeral Home  
1960 O'Brig Avenue  
Guntersville, AL 35976  
(256) 582-3411

# Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



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**Kent Hierstein** - September 20, 2016 at 08:29 AM

MB

“ TR - I have so many fond, joyful memories of Joni that I could write a book. However, I will just share my favorite. You had accepted me as your intern shortly before the last race of the season of 1993 in Atlanta. As part of your mentoring you invited me to come "watch and learn the ropes"...and my family were invited too. But first, you wanted me to meet Joni and get her knowledge on how to be a professional woman in the man's world of NASCAR. She taught me the ins and outs while we repainted your downstairs bathroom. She told me how to dress, how to walk through those gates with confidence and how to tell the men where to go when they assumed I was there as a groupie. She taught me that if I really wanted to one day work in the sport, I had to set the boundaries from the outset. I got to Atlanta and walked through those gates like I belonged and by the end of the day, I had earned the team's respect. Joni always greeted me with a smile and a "Hey MB!" She always tried to protect me and she was always happy for all my achievements. Joni was like a second mom to me, she was that special to me. I will always love her and miss her everyday. Why did it take so long to write this? Because as much as I have written, I could not find the words. Joni had a special soul...I truly believe that she is still with each and every person whose life she touched. For now, Joni is "sailing on the ships of Heaven" headed to Margaritaville and one day, that is where we will meet her again! All our love, MB, John and Liz Biddle and Tama Nunnelley.



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Mari "MB" Biddle-Dyson - May 14, 2016 at 04:16 AM

CG

“ Tom, I was sorry to hear of Joni's Passing. She was always so nice and always smiling. I saw a picture on a racing website of Alan at Darlington in 1986 after the race. We were all standing around the trailer and in the background Joni and Patti are on the track in my new Honda CRX hot lapping it. I had forgotten about that until I saw that picture. I remembered she wanted to test it out and get you to buy her one. We will keep you in our prayers.  
Chris Glenn

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**Chris Glenn** - April 15, 2016 at 12:33 AM

BW

“ TR--  
For the first time in my life I am at a lost for words. But, tonight Teresa and I share the sorrow. I wish I could say more...but I cannot seem to write through the tears, even after all you taught me. For Teresa and I time will stand still on Friday morning. Fortunately for all of us the memories will race on forever.  
We share your loss, your love, your lady.  
Sweet dreams.  
Bill and Teresa

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**Bill Weber** - April 15, 2016 at 12:10 AM



“ Heart's Companion Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joni Roberts.



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April 14, 2016 at 06:12 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Joni Roberts.*



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April 14, 2016 at 04:39 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Joni Roberts.*



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April 14, 2016 at 11:06 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Joni Roberts.*



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April 14, 2016 at 10:42 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Joni Roberts.*



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April 14, 2016 at 10:02 AM