

Jo Anne Banta – BS 1953 Home Economics

Jul 29, 1932 - Oct 2, 2023

Age 60 – Anchorage, AK

Jo Anne Banta (nee Christensen) passed away on Oct. 2, 2023, in her home at the Thomas Center for Senior Living.

Born in Dickinson, N.D., Jo Anne was the eldest child of Victor and Mildred Christensen (nee Hein). Along with her younger sister, Carol, she was raised on the Figure 4 cattle ranch adjacent to the Fort Berthold Reservation in Northwestern North Dakota. In her ranching youth, Jo Anne participated in everything from roundups to rodeo barrel racing events. She graduated college with a degree in home economics from North Dakota Agricultural College and began her career as a teacher.

Jo Anne and John Fredericks of Fort Berthold were married in 1957. Following a divorce in 1959, Jo Anne accepted a teaching position at Cordova High School and moved to Alaska with 2-year-old son, Joe. Soon after arriving in Cordova, Jo Anne slipped on the steps of the local post office and was picked up "literally and figuratively" by Robert N. "Bud" Banta. At the time, Bud was a single father of four children - JoAnn, Mike, Gail and Norma - and they soon formed a loving blended family of seven, with a marriage that lasted 52 years.

Jo Anne and Bud spent 43 years in Cordova, juggling teaching responsibilities with commercial fishing and time with their many beloved friends in the community. Bud constructed a new home for the large family, which was barely completed when the '64 earthquake hit. The home survived unscathed, but their boat, the Coffee Time, was impaled on a tree stump, a result of the post-earthquake tidal wave in Prince William Sound.

Jo Anne was a much beloved teacher, a favorite among Cordova students. After 20 years, Jo Anne retired from teaching, but continued to work for the community as an administrative assistant at the Cordova Hospital, before she and Bud moved to Anchorage, Alaska, in 2000, to be closer to family. After successfully battling breast cancer soon after their move, Jo Anne volunteered for FISH with her good friend Dana and became a Master Gardener and wrote their newsletter for several years. She and Bud had a second home in Kailua-Kona, Hawaii, where they spent winter months with Bud fishing and Jo Anne spending time with friends, taking art classes, doing water aerobics and Tai Chi with her good friend Robin, and generally enjoying the Hawaiian "kine" life. She became an accomplished painter and several of her paintings grace the homes of her family members.

Three years after Bud's death in 2012, Jo Anne became one of the earliest residents at the Thomas Center for Senior Living. She developed happy and meaningful relationships with all who lived and worked at the facility and thoroughly enjoyed spending time in her new community. The family especially thanks the Thomas Center Manager, Betty Glover, for her kindness and expertise as well as the caregivers who attended to Jo Anne in her final years, along with her faith community and priests, Gail Loken and Katherine Hunt of Christ Church Episcopal. We extend special appreciation to caregiver, Florence Achwil, who was at Jo Anne's side for eight years - they loved each other deeply.

Jo Anne is survived by her daughter, Jo Ann (Art) Tilgner of Wasilla, Alaska; son, Joe (Janice) Banta of Anchorage; grandchildren, Robert Noe, Kristen Tilgner, Robert Wiese, Wendy Talley, Christopher Johnson, Wade Banta, Tore Banta and Jonas Banta; and brother-in-law, Tom Fredericks (Judy) and

family. She was preceded in death by son, Michael Banta; daughters, Gail Bernard and Norma Phillips; and grandchildren, Michael Noe and Matthew Johnson.

A Celebration of Life will take place at the Thomas Center at 2 p.m. on Oct. 14, 2023, which will also be Zoomed. Memorial contributions may be made in Jo Anne's name to Christ Church Episcopal, P.O. Box 111963, Anchorage, AK 99511; or to the Alaska Master Gardener Program at AMGA, P.O. Box 221403, Anchorage, AK 99522-1043.