

# Joanne Lee Allen Kartchner

## A Remembrance

When Ross and I separately pointed out snow atop the Santa Rita Mountains on separate trips, it wasn't just a reminder that our journey to Arizona was meant to bury a loved one. It was that this landscape, which had seemed so unremarkable to us as children, had become precious. We labored to memorize the sight, to recall our visits to it, as though that was even possible. Yet we had an indistinct sense of its importance, as though nothing about the visit would be casual.

Part of the work would be to summon our memories of Aunt Jo: the ones dimly remembered but with warmth, and the crisp ones that survived the decades, like the smell of hay or the sound of a cattle crossing. And the names.

*Now who will name  
what lit up the tree of my blood & yours,  
sprouted thirteen branches of its own?*

Just as it was not possible that we had lost our Aunt Jo, half of that sturdy temple of Aunt-Jo-and-Uncle-Dean, we would struggle even to remember the names and faces of the children she had carried into this world and then named. Who else could do as she had? How could the snow have settled on those Santa Rita peaks when we weren't watching?

We had not been watching, but it was now for us to be remembering, and we hardly felt up to the task. Except for the knowledge that Aunt Jo would have forgiven us this failing.

It's human nature to tell the last story first, so let it be told here, too. We knew only part of recent events, but knew that it had been a difficult several days for everyone. We learned that Aunt Jo, facing a lengthy recovery amid post-accident pain and distress, insisted that she wanted to go home. Home meant the homestead where Dean Kartchner and Joanne Lee Allen had raised our thirteen cousins, hosted innumerable birthdays, weddings, announcements and pronouncements of events most of which I knew little of. Home meant leaving a hospital bed where, despite her discomfort, she still had enough presence of mind to thank the nurses and to want to have a hand in this chapter of her life.

The Underwood cousins knew that it was not so much a family, connected to ours like arrows drawn on an ancestral tree, as a thriving village crackling with youth and a commitment not to withhold aid to any of the furthest corners of the earth. But also cousins, who, given the chance, would gladly watch TV at Grandma Becky's in bold forays away from big-family interdependence.

*Who will name what paraphrased  
the San Pedro's riparian twists  
into the rigid Southern Pacific lines  
that still brought you here?*

Home meant, I learned, the place where Joanne could sip yet another Eege's. Home meant hearing what had once been the Southern Pacific (and corporate cousin) train that brought Essie and Hilary from Kansas to Arizona rattle once more by the land where, for half a century, Dean and Joanne had broken bread, sung in church together, and, now and then, hosted this or that offspring of elder sister Billie.

We took turns making that trip. Ross remembered spending a memorable week or two in Benson. Cele, Preston and Rachel, I'll bet. And Billie herself, who sought out their care and companionship when she went to Benson to recuperate after heart valve replacement. It was one of the sisters' best times together, she later told me.



For the six of us that are Billie's children, our memory of Aunt Joanne ("Aunt Jo") is likely frozen in a stereotypical position: one child held against her hip, and another at her side clutching the other hand. Perhaps a few more straggling behind her.

But a time came when this duty was no longer uppermost, or at least been transferred to grandchildren, she and Dean ventured off to Columbia and Mexico.

Billie took note of those journeys with pride, admiration, internationalist zeal - - and maybe a bit of envy. I shared one of those messages with Joanne in July 2010.

*Aunt Jo,*

*Sometimes it comforts me to read her (typically very brief) messages. It helps me to remember the nuances of her voice, word choice, and conversations we were having at the time.*

*Love, Mark*

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*Date: Fri, 18 Jun 1999 21:27:31 EDT*

*Subject: Joanne Allen-Kartchner*

*I received a nice E-mail from Joanne--it's interesting how casual they are about the very real risks down there. Let me quote you some parts of the letter.*

*"Folks were understandably upset here when the ELN went into a Catholic Church during Mass and kidnapped a number of parishioners. It was in a well-to-do area of Cali. The guerrillas explained they took that action because they wanted people to know there weren't any 'safe' areas. The archbishop said he might excommunicate the kidnapers.*

*Might?*

*Dean travelled to Agua de Dios, a former leper colony, with President Francisco Ignacio Giménez Gras, a Spaniard, of the [Bogota South Mission](#). They visited with the government doctor in charge of the treatment center there. They then travelled to a little town, Chicoral, to have Dean evaluate a young woman who'd been ill for three years. [Ed.: "This region is only accessible by unpaved roads by way of La Cumbre from the north, the Cali-Buenaventura Road from the west and Dapa from the east through a forested pass at 2,100 meters (6,900 feet) – [Wikipedia](#)] As it turned out, she was a full-blown schizophrenic.*

*Enroute they drove through mountain valleys and President Giménez pointed out a little town on the side of the mountain and said that was a place controlled by the guerrillas. Not a road to be travelling at night. Two days after they got back to Bogota, the FARC kidnapped twenty people on the outskirts of [Agua de Dios](#). They had a list of people they wanted to take, and they nabbed the one and included nineteen others who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. You don't even have to be on their list to get a free trip to the rain forests.*

When I read these letters again, I was struck by the similarities and differences between rural Colombia and rural southern Arizona. Cochise County has a storied history. Uncle Jay dismissed Tombstone as a tourist trap, which it is. But as a brand, it has sometimes enjoyed an international spotlight. It's why when [Krypton Brothers](#) phones, the caller ID will show Tombstone, AZ. But in making that selection, the knowledge that my extended Benson family was not far away made the idea somehow less preposterous.

Those risky trips to Colombia tend to mask the obvious symbiosis between small town Benson and big town Tucson. Rural areas share a curious view of bigger town economic / social engines. Small town folk might at once dismiss and envy a larger town. Tucson

provided college, higher-paying jobs, bigger shopping venues. Benson provided physicians that cared for Tucson sick, including an Underwood or two. Benson provided breathing room, affordability, a place for a village to thrive without dissolving into suburbia.

A vignette painted during the ceremony mentioned Joanne scraping ice off the family car's windshield so Dean could begin an early morning commute to Tucson. The sacrifices, unmentioned during the funeral service, were undoubtedly mutual and many. Somehow the handling of this fact had what Billie might have interpreted not as feminist but as nouveau frontier. And she would have approved of the symbolism.

The University of Arizona occupies a major place in the extended family. Joanne's children filled many a Wildcat classroom as did Billie's. Along with Billie, Joanne and Jay, I was one of them. I've often worked to explain the pros and cons of a large university to the "small schools are better" crowd. Collectively, perhaps, we, and most certainly Joanne, made the case.



A few became keen followers of the school's sports teams, and from the sound of it, Joanne's Wildcat fanaticism exceeded even Ross's. His, along with that of Kris and Page, are the subject of family amusement – and sometimes astonishment.

With heavy heart, I watched Brian and Milo hold off the backhoe in Pomerene that Sunday morning – choosing to put muscle to old school shovel, surely a sign of respect. It's an image I'll never forget.

The new grave is very close to Billie's, and that is fitting, and Sunday we stood nearby speaking with Milo, Kathryn and Ellen. It was as if I could hear Mom's voice – ever the nurturer – listening, and then correcting the details of the stories we told.

Billie and Joanne had an abiding respect and love for one another. As Jay later pointed out, in its own way, the Allen family bond was no less strong than any other bond tested by this difficult turn of events. The presence of Barry, Aunt Brenda and Uncle Don bore this out, and it was time to tell stories of Great Grandma Richards, and the years of caretaking that Brenda and Don accepted in her later years.

The diversions from Joanne's remembrance were often about the achievements and deep community ties of her children. I think we were all surprised by how intensely close to one another speaking of her made us feel.

*Along which echolalia could become libretto,  
ranch hands become surgeons'  
teasers become teachers,  
Frère Jacques become funeral march?*

It seemed so appropriate that on Saturday evening, the speeches and singing were freely interspersed with the sounds of young children in the audience – most of it preverbal. In psychology, Billie once explained, it's called echolalia, and it was certainly a steady presence in the Benson homestead.

That singsong and imitation, Joanne's children proved, would grow and reform into the skills of surgeons and teachers and mothers and church elders. There was much for Joanne to be proud of, and much to marvel in. The child in us, like the child in that 1939 photo of Joanne, is ever-present, which made it ripe for Mahler's adaptation of the childhood melody *Frère Jacques* into a moving funeral march (Symphony #1, movement III - Feierlich und gemein, ohne zu schleppen). The musicians on the Allen side included Barry and Steve and probably others who escaped my attention. The singing and musicianship during the service was all Kartchner. It wasn't Mahler, but it was all the more powerful because we knew the voices would have a perfect trajectory to Joanne.



## Portage

With such a generational spread (I'm the oldest child of the Allen – Underwood generation, and somehow ever older than Brian Kartchner), I struggle for a suitable analogy to explain our different perceptions of Joanne. Because as I shared a meal with Brian, Lynda, Jay, Steve, Russell and Peggy, it was clear that along with the precious common ground in our memories, there was much that did not overlap. Jay knew a Joanne that no one else – not even Billie – could know. What stories would Uncle Dick

have told about Joanne? Brian, in drawing scriptural inspiration for his eulogy, discovered passages from siblings, and acknowledged that for stretches of Joanne's life, he could not be as knowledgeable about some aspects as could younger siblings.

Frustratingly, it was to be an imperfect patchwork of scenes and recollections.

*. . . overran the land of Cochise & still named it after him?*

Driving into that wide valley that held Benson and Pomerene, I was reminded of Cochise. In his later years he too must have contemplated that expanse ("escarpment" has seemed to me like the right word for this, but it's geologically incorrect) and pondered how to share it with the newcomer Spaniards, could not have imagined Benson, or the creeping vastness of Tucson. His dreams would be mostly submerged in the march of US history, but the county still holds his name. In a way, it's a gravestone for his tribe.

Which analogy works best for this predicament? Perhaps that of a ship – each of us set sail down a different part of the river to share a separate part of the arc that was Joanne's life? Each with our different windows as we slid through time?

*Who will name what paraphrased  
the San Pedro's riparian twists*

That analogy seemed too linear, failing to take into account the jagged arroyos and rocky stream beds of southern Arizona. Perhaps *portage* then? Instead of a single journey downstream, we periodically pick up our canoes and retrace our steps upstream?

On one such backward-tracing attempt, I recalled my time with Joanne when she took me to San Diego. That was before Brian. I recall little except her constant presence and the salt smell of warm sand in my toddler toes.

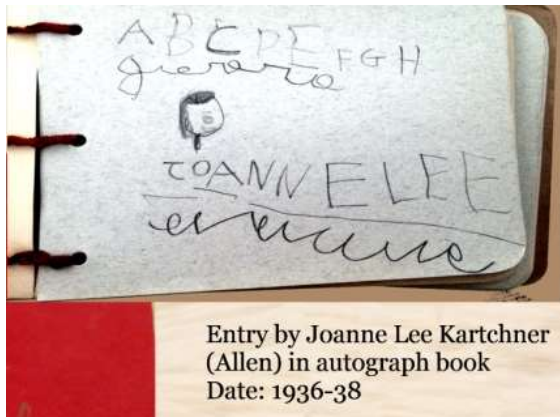
Should you doubt this problem of jagged perceptions, consider our different glimpses of Citation Gardens (a co-op, rare in Tucson). For those of us with big families and with infrequent autonomy, those were transformative one-on-one times with Grandma Becky. Many a Gardens story was shared. Turns out we even had different food recollections (mine was lemon meringue pie).

Not that we can trust what we thought at the time were unforgettable landmarks along the stream bed.

In speaking with Jay Allen (Uncle Jay), I discovered that I was wrong about the specialization during his years with the US Army. No, he hadn't started out in crypto (a precursor to a computer career for many vets). And he'd been to Sierra Vista only in passing (Sierra Vista is a key Army electronic warfare intelligence base). He did go on to become a developer.

Similarly, I had no idea that Joanne was such a writer of letters, though I had received a few emails over the past couple of decades. I regret never having discussed that with her, in this era of diminished letter-writing. She, like Mom, was also not digitally unaware.

In 2013 I received a LinkedIn invitation. I wonder what she thought of the Snapchat / Facebook era.



Sometimes, I learned, her letters were missives, sometimes a scriptural insight. It started early for her, as [this snapshot of her early handwriting](#) showed. A collection of those missives would have a guaranteed readership through the family – including those too young to remember her. Perhaps even a few unborn great-grandchildren endowed with unusual curiosity and an active imagination.

In a recent (2015) message, she wrote Kris,

*“You had not crossed the cattle guard before I began my cookie feast. I ate, count them, 9 consecutive cookies. Perfect cookies. What's not to love. And I am not ashamed of my gluttony.*

*Great visit with you, Kris. Loved the updates.*

*Thanks for all you do at the cemetery. Grandma Becky would be especially pleased. She had such an orderly persona.*

*Love, Aunt Jo*

At the time, this message served to remind me of the cattle guard at the edge of the property. When the email made its rounds from Kris to me, Page and Ross, Ross was enroute to Belgium after a recent terror attack. We do what we can with these measures of protection, but loss is never far away.

A few years ago, Joanne wrote to Kris and remembered Mom:

*Thursday, December 19, 2013 9:40 AM*

*Kris,*

*I'm so very happy to hear from you.*

*First. I miss my sister. How many times folks have said this: ‘I'd love to talk to my sister.’ I can only imagine how you all miss her.*

*Second. I've got the Allen macular degeneration. Uncle Dean and I tell each other: ‘It is what it is.’ So we're dealing with it. He is wonderfully helpful. It's in the dry stage so that's good. And when I think about Jay and his long struggle, I consider myself a first-class whiner. It's frustrating more than anything. It really slows a person down. The last time I talked with my sister was a trip I had taken to*

*Tucson and on a whim (very unlike Allens) I stopped by her house. We had a great visit and expressed her frustration at the eye condition. I would dearly love to hear her raucous laughter when she would get completely carried away.*

*Third. We had nine of our families home for Thanksgiving. I prayed fervently for a warm, unwind day as we don't have room in our kitchen (and no dining room) to seat the crew. It was a lovely day. The four who couldn't come were Paul (deployed in Africa from his base in Germany, Amy in North Carolina, Jared in Virginia and Ellen in Idaho).*

*Fourth. About a week before I got this idea that I would like to honor the heritage of Susan Catherine Rhoades Richards (Grandma Becky's mother). Didn't really have time to do a decent job. I had a little display table that showed the Richards family Bible which showed Grandpa & Grandma's wedding information. It was given to me as a teenager when I would correspond with Uncle James Richards (in his 80s) in Kansas. He sent me the family Bible which had been a gift from John Franklin Richards (Milo's father) to his bride-to-be as an engagement gift. I had the wedding ring quilt Grandma Richards had given me as a wedding present. As it happened, it was the last quilt she had made. Also there were items such as a rag rug she had made, her recipe box, three of her handkerchiefs, a birthday calendar book where she and others had recorded names of birthdates of her posterity, the best picture of Grandma Richards (taken by Don Underwood), a family group sheet where Grandma Richards is shown with her parents and siblings, other photographs, the original marriage certificate, a little tin box Uncle Donald gave me - which box his father had made for Grandma Richards and the documents found therein.*

*I can't remember other items. I did find a bouquet of miniature sunflowers placed in a brass bucket to honor her Kansas heritage. Grandma was born in the Osage Nation in Kansas Territory and Grandma Becky was born in the Osage Nation in Oklahoma Territory. Uncle Donald graciously mailed me copies of his book that is a fictionalized history of John Earl Rhoades (Grandma Richards' father) family. [Haven't seen this, but would like to! – Mark.]*

*I also compiled a 9-page history of Grandma's life - and I used recollections from her granddaughters, Billie and Joanne. I'm sure you have a copy of Billie's first life story. It was immensely useful to me.*



*Sure seems like I'm rambling. If you think you or any of your siblings would like a copy of the life story, just let me know. [Haven't seen this, either but would like to! – Mark.]*

*Love, Aunt Jo (the rambler)*

All weekend I was keenly aware that there were many uncounted events in Joanne's life that I did not, and would probably never know. This is in the way of things, perhaps, even in the richness of a life fully lived. But they also serve to make the end of such a life all the more abrupt.

She and Kris helped keep the storytelling flame alive. In 2012, we received this story that Billie told about "playing store" with Jay.

*Dear Kris,*

*Your cousin, Dorie, in California had written me about her Dad, your Uncle Dick. I came across this email your mother had sent to Uncle Jay and me when we were asking questions about our older siblings. You've probably heard these stories, but if there's anything new in these recollections, would you send them along to your brothers and sisters?*

*Here we go:*

*I found this email written about ten years ago. Uncle Jay and I were asking questions about Aunt Billie and your father. Thought you might be interested. So here are Aunt Billie's thoughts:*

*About Dick: Yes, we were very close. Because we moved so often and our lives were so troubled we only had each other. Until he started getting wise, he would play any game that I suggested and since I was pretty bossy, those were the only ones we played. I can remember being in a back yard playing "store" when a hailstorm trapped us so that we couldn't get to the house until it was all over.*

*My clearest memories of us as children were the trips he and I took to El Paso. Because we had railroad passes, of course, the only cost was our meals. We would get on a train car early in the morning. wander around the downtown area and return that afternoon. Again, I'm not sure of our ages but we must have been pretty young, probably preteens.*

*My other vivid memories are not so pleasant. At 427 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street he and I did the dishes together. I washed and he was supposed to wipe. He couldn't be seen from the living room so he would flip his damp*

*towel at my leg until I retaliated. Because he was hiding, I received the punishment. Oh, I was such a martyr!*

*Dick and I went to the Dials over Christmas. I would guess we were 6 and 8, but I'm not sure about our ages. It was a memorable time, they heaped the gifts on us. Something is tickling my memory here. I can remember going to Channing, Texas and there were lots and lots of grasshoppers. That wouldn't have been a Christmas time, would it? Maybe we were there twice.*

The railroad whistle returns.

Jay's second wife Margaret and Mom felt a special kinship. While she was quite ill at the time, Margaret journeyed to Tucson for Mom's service. And Joanne was kind enough to let us know in 2009 even before Joanne flew to Utah for the Margaret's service. Mom had forwarded a post-op status report on Margaret only a couple of weeks before Mom died.

Who will handle the reportage now? Joanne knew these details were important to us.

Throughout I've been quoting from myself -- clearly is in bad taste. My excuse is that the poem collects disparate feelings provoked by the two days in Arizona. I wrote "The Naming," for Joanne the night before the funeral service.

*Somehow you'd named them all,  
you honey of lost desert streams.  
If the rain should come again to praise us  
we will remember all your water's names.*

For those of us who grew up in the desert, water is the symbol of life. Water has a sweetness that reaches the taste buds of scarcity like no other substance on the planet.

To say desert dwellers long for water is scarcely adequate. To be precise, we thirst. We are involuntary students of its absence.

Without Joanne Lee, loss flows into us and cuts into bone.

Yet there was joy amid the tears. Sarah, Ellen, Kathryn stood by me at my Mother's grave even as their Mother lay nearby. Loss strengthened our fragile connections. Heartened us, even as Brian, Amy, Wade, Milo and Dwight wept with elegiac loss.

Mark

## The Naming

Now who will name  
what lit up the tree of my blood & yours,  
sprouted thirteen branches of its own,  
overran the land of Cochise & still named it after him?

Who will name what paraphrased  
the San Pedro's riparian twists  
into the rigid Southern Pacific lines  
that still brought you here?

Who will name the lost occupants  
of *Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenante*,  
will preserve your secret knowledge  
of the perfectible arc?

Along which echolalia could become libretto,  
ranch hands become surgeons'  
teasers become teachers,  
Frère Jacques become funeral march?

Without you this place  
belies its name, roots foundering  
on granite caches of unnamable ache  
once named Caress, Comfort, *Chihuicahui*.

Somehow you'd named them all,  
you honey of lost desert streams.  
If the rain should come again to praise us  
we will remember all your water's names.

For Joanne Lee Allen Kartchner

February 25, 2017

*In Loving Memory of*



**Joanne Lee Allen Kartchner**

*Born*  
*February 25, 1934*  
*Tucson, Arizona*

*Passed Away*  
*February 20, 2017*  
*Benson, Arizona*

**Charles Dean and Joanne Kartchner**

*13 Children*

*57 Grandchildren – 23 Great Grandchildren*

<i>Brian and Lynda</i>	<i>Derek, Melyssa, Laura, Branden, Sean, Garet, Cade</i>
<i>Wade and Vicky</i>	<i>Tori, Brennan, Wilson, Camille</i>
<i>Milo and Jenny</i>	<i>Landon, Emily, Jarom, Dallin, Heidi, Jessy, Byron, Darren</i>
<i>Dwight and Melissa</i>	<i>Emily, Max, Grace, John</i>
<i>Amy and Shayne</i>	<i>Jacob, Shiloh, Caitlin, Rebecca, Jaimee</i>
<i>Jared and Rae Dawn</i>	<i>Zachary, Lincoln, Reilly, Sophia, Jackson</i>
<i>Ellen and Reese</i>	<i>Peter, Katie, Seth, Lydia, Paul</i>
<i>Sarah and Michael</i>	<i>Anne, Elise</i>
<i>Kathryn and Joel</i>	<i>Rebecca, Dean, Hannah</i>
<i>Matthew and Julia</i>	<i>Azul, Mateo</i>
<i>Martha and Brad</i>	<i>Milo, Eliza, Clara, James, Willard</i>
<i>Paul and Jeanie</i>	<i>Becky, David, John, Miriam</i>
<i>Kristen and Randy</i>	<i>Emma, Carly, Sammy</i>

**Funeral Service of Joanne Lee Allen Kartchner**

Saturday, February 25, 2017, 6:00 p.m.  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

Presiding..... President Damon Trejo  
Conducting ..... Bishop Jess Price  
Prelude Music..... Stan Kartchner

Opening Prayer..... Dwight Kartchner

Opening Hymn..... #286  
"Oh What Songs of the Heart"

Organist..... Anne Clark  
Chorister..... Lynda Kartchner

Life Story..... Wade Kartchner

Musical Number..... "Amazing Grace"  
Accompanied by Caitlin Czuba  
Sung by Mom's Daughters:  
Amy Judd, Ellen Gregory, Sarah Clark, Kathryn Huber,  
Martha Ford, Kristen Judd, Lynda Kartchner,  
Vicky Kartchner, Jenny Kartchner, Melissa Kartchner,  
Rae Dawn Kartchner and Jeanie Kartchner

Remarks..... Brian Kartchner

Closing Hymn..... #136  
"I Know That My Redeemer Lives"

Closing Prayer..... Paul Kartchner

**Pallbearers**

Shayne Judd  
Joel Huber

Reese Gregory  
Brad Ford

Michael Clark  
Randy Judd

**Family Viewing**

Family Prayer..... Matthew Kartchner

**Funeral Service**

Family Prayer..... Jared Kartchner

**Interment**

Dedication of the Grave..... Milo Kartchner

-Richardson's Remembrance Center-