

An American Friendship—Spring or Fall 1968 or 1969

Pamela Maus Bond Contractor; August 24, 2012



Flip hairdos were still weirdly popular in the by sleeping with large orange juice cans, hair was tightly coiled, clipped snugly to the cans, myself. My long, straight hair would years, relieving me of the torture of sleeping rollers of any sort just to achieve a hair for some reason, I would in future use give way to a brush and a blow dryer.

beautiful wavy hair very short, which was a good thing—she had less of it to lose when she was 57.

late 60s, produced in Sandee's case around which her rich black-brown top of her head. I'd never used stay with me for quite a number of on toilet-paper rolls, Spoolies®, or semblance of curls. If I needed curvy steam rollers, which would then Sandee would later cut her

Two frivolous high school girls, behaving as if they were glamorous. It must have been a Friday. My sweater, a heather raspberry that matched my skirt, and Sandee's wool-acrylic dress, deep blue with green accents, suggest after-school fallish weather, belying my memory that this was the night of her spring prom. Maybe it was still cool. It was some kind of dance, anyway. It made no difference to me. Sandee and I went to all the same schools and were always in the same grade; but neither this nor any future dance would be *my* prom. The girl who once enviously watched the "Miss America Pageant" would never wear an evening gown, even for a silly thing like a high school dance.

Coiffed and sprayed, Sandee stopped for a quick picture with her reclusive friend before ascending the staircase opposite the white, valanced front door that would open to her future so she could don her prom dress and become a princess. I cannot recall what she looked like in her regalia, but I do seem to remember the creamy, pinkish-peach lipstick she wore on what her father always called her "kissable lips." A few of Sandee's other girlfriends from another school were due to arrive shortly to see her off in her pumpkin coach, but as the "best friend" I was the one who helped her dress and escorted her downstairs to join a betuxed and bedazzled Mitch, the Prince Charming who would become Cinderella's husband in less than 10 years—and her widower in about 40.

Sandee's impish, let's-get-this-over-with, pre-prom smile was aimed right at the camera. My downcast eyes avoided it. Who had taken the photo? One of her other girlfriends, of which she had many? Her sister, Ronnie, who was the same age as Wayne, my little brother, and was therefore not noteworthy? Could it have been either Miriam or Henry, Sandee's parents, who had whole-heartedly absorbed me into their family and couldn't have known that I would attend their and Sandee's funerals before this essay-caption would ever be written? Through her hairdo and smiles, Sandee did not see the tears in my eyes—happy for her, unhappier for me. Ah, this must be the reason, in anticipation of the moment of her departure for "our" school prom, that my gaze was averted. What I did not know was that I was also avoiding a future vision of the sorrow that would enshroud that room, so full of family joy that milestone evening in the late 1960s.

This working-class living room in Northeast Philly had been the site of my entrance into the Crespy family 10 years earlier, sometime during second grade in September 1959, right after my family had returned from living briefly in Florida. On September 15 that year, my half-sister had been born, died, and was resurrected. Because she never came home from the hospital, my mother had told my brother and me that she hadn't lived. (Unbeknownst to us back then, she was adopted within days of her birth.) Sandee became "Susan's" replacement in my seven-year-old world and lived just long enough to meet my sister, whom we now call Vicki Sue, after her remarkable re-emergence in 2009 from the shadows of our past. Other than my family, no one was more moved or jubilant that I'd found my half-sister than the one who'd taken her place all those years ago. Sandee and Vicki Sue met that October 2009, 40 years after this picture was taken and 11 months before Sandee died, at age 57, of the leukemia that was starting to leach the life out of her and that even she didn't yet know she had.

In September 2010, Ronnie—now *very* noteworthy—gave me a hollow, ivory-colored ceramic heart with a separate, smaller solid heart in the center. The idea was to bury the small solid heart with the beloved deceased and for the bereaved to keep the hollow heart as a remembrance of both loss and eternal connection. Although I helped carry my childhood friend to her grave, I gave the solid heart to Vicki Sue. Sandee would have loved knowing that my broken heart actually has a living center.

