In Memoriam: Jane Vicroy Scott

by Jeffrey Glassberg

Jane Vicroy Scott, died on July 21, 2017, following a three year battle with cancer.

Jane served on the NABA Board and as NABA Secretary/Treasurer since NABA’s inception in 1992. Although her title was Secretary/Treasurer, in reality, she functioned as NABA’s Chief Operating Officer.

Jane was born in Selma, Alabama, on August 16, 1944 to Clarence E. (Vic) Vicroy and Maude Eileen Yeager. Vic was in the U.S. Air Force and, immediately after World War II, was based in England, ostensibly as a meteorologist, but actually as the second in command for communications of the predecessor of the Defense Intelligence Agency (the military counterpart of the C.I.A.) — he was a spy. He would always leave on trips, giving Jane instructions on what to do if he didn’t come home.

Her mother’s family had deep roots in Alabama. In 2000, Jane discovered what is probably the largest population of federally endangered Mitchell’s Satyr butterflies in the world, in the Talladega National Forest, in Bibb County, Alabama, on land that she later learned had been owned by her great-great grandfather.

The eldest of seven sisters, Jane both help raise the younger siblings and tried to shield them from the brunt of their mother’s frequent wrath. When Jane was deciding upon a name to be called by our first grandchild, the road, in their freezer, so that she could put a dead skunk, which she had found on time she convinced her parents to allow her to put a dead skunk, which she had found on the way to San Francisco.

After two years at Judson, Jane briefly went to the U. of Hawaii and then transferred to TCU in Texas, where she received both a B.A. and a Masters degree.

From TCU, Jane was admitted to a Ph.D. program at Baylor College of Medicine, in Houston, Texas. While at Baylor, she took a seminar class at Rice University, discussing recent scientific articles about bacteriophage lambda. I was also in that class and, the next year, we became a couple. Our first trip together was to southern Mexico, looking for butterflies.

After earning her Ph.D. in 1976, Jane and I moved to California where she took a position at the University of California, San Francisco while I was at the Stanford University School of Medicine. We lived between them, in San Mateo. This was at the dawn of biotechnology, and many of the breakthrough techniques were being developed in the Stanford Biochemistry Dept., where I worked. So Jane would often come down to Palo Alto, to learn new techniques and get materials. And then, it was easier to get back to our house than to go all the way to San Francisco.

But, when it came time for her family to leave England, her parents told her that she couldn’t stay there by herself. Rather, she was sent to Hawaii — where, at that time, there was no serious ballet — to help take care of her father’s aging mother. She never quite got over this loss, but continued to love ballet and dance.

Raised a Catholic, Jane first attended college at a small Baptist Woman’s College in Alabama — Judson College (this later proved to be critical for funding the National Butterfly Center). As she did her entire life, Jane managed to fit in, enjoy herself and make lifelong friends.

Jane had always been interested in science in general, and in biology in particular. As a child, she chased butterflies and brought home horned lizards in her pants pockets, trying to learn what made them tick. One time she convinced her parents to allow her to dissect it. It was pointless to stand in the way of something that Jane wanted to do. At Judson, the biology teacher was a charismatic, glamorous, independent woman, and so Jane was encouraged to pursue her scientific interests.

After I started a biotech company, Jane decided that one of us needed a real job, so she left Rockefeller University and joined Lederle Laboratories (part of American Cyanamid) which was the largest vaccine manufacturer in the United States. Jane quickly rose to become Director of Vaccine Development and one of the highest ranking women in the corporation. If you, or a loved one, received a DPT vaccine from the late 1980s through the mid 1990s, you, or they, got the vaccine that Jane brought to market, as it was the only DPT vaccine then used in the United States.

Jane traveled throughout the world for her work. She went frequently to Japan, where the people at the Japanese pharmaceutical company she worked with referred to her as “strong American woman.” While the Berlin wall was still up, Jane sneaked into East Berlin to attend a meeting. Difficulties ensued.

Because of her expertise with biopharmaceuticals, Jane was selected by the U.S. government to be part of a team that investigated Russian biological warfare facilities following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Despite the work demands, Jane managed to be a wonderful mother to our son, Matthew Scott, and a spectacular grandmother to Hunter and Hayden. She was also, without a doubt, the most fantastic wife in the history of the planet.

Throughout the past ten to 15 years, Jane has worked almost full-time for NABA, without any financial compensation. All that NABA has accomplished is due, in good part, to Jane’s hard work, drive and belief in doing good. She answered the phones with a warm and welcoming tone, she watched NABA’s audited tax returns with a hawk’s eye, she managed payroll, for a short time she was Executive Director of the National Butterfly...
Center, she spent the night making sure the contractors were on the up-and-up, pouring the foundation (at 3 am) for the Visitors Pavilion at the National Butterfly Center, she proofread *American Butterflies*, she made friends of everyone she met, she fashioned the editor of *American Butterflies* into a semblance of a human being.

Unlike almost all the rest of us, Jane became more beautiful each year, not only as a person, but also physically — at least to my eyes.

Jane was a force of nature — strong, ebullient, and brilliant; yet warm and kind. She made everyone she met feel better about themselves, while accomplishing so much for the world.

Jane’s love, passion and penetrating intelligence are irreplaceable. Jane’s spirit remains strong in the many people she touched.

Above: Jane at one with the universe, April 22, 2001. Laguna Atascosa NWR, Cameron Co., TX.

Left: Jane Scott and Jeffrey Glassberg at one with the universe. Nov. 27, 1992. Chappaqua, Westchester Co., NY.


Bottom left: Jane with George Plimpton while he was covering the butterfly count for a major story that appeared in the New York Times Magazine. July 9, 1995. Westchester Co., NY.


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