



Donna Kaye Manna

September 15, 1938 - May 31, 2018

Donna Kaye (Gruenewaldt) Manna, born September 15, 1938 to parents Edward A. and Marguerite W. (Mead) Gruenewaldt, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, passed away on May 31, 2018 in San Antonio, Texas, after a sudden and aggressive diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. She had recently celebrated her 60th wedding anniversary with her husband, children and grandchildren. Donna spent her senior year of high school in Yokohama, Japan, where her father was stationed in the Army. Upon returning to the States, they were stationed at Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas, where she met her future husband, Paul E. Manna, then a 1st Lt. in the Army. They married in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on May 17, 1958, and started their family a year later. She followed her husband to Germany and their family expanded in 1960 and 1961. They returned to the States and their family expanded again in 1963, and once more in 1966. After 17 moves with the Army (which provided educational experiences, created a strong family bond, and fostered adaptability), they made San Antonio their final home in 1974. During all that time, Donna was active with military wives' volunteer functions and volunteered in many capacities with her children's various sports activities. When her children reached their teenage years, Donna entered the workforce, working at United Services Automobile Association (USAA) for the next 22 years. She started as a part-time mail assembly clerk in the Communications Center–Incoming Mail Department, and finished her career in management in the same department. During that time she also pursued a college education

in the evenings, attaining an Associate Degree at San Antonio College and later earning a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Incarnate Word College. Donna participated in numerous volunteer activities organized through USAA, including Mentoring, Junior Achievement, and Habitat for Humanity, and she was a member of the USAA Toastmasters chapter. She also served as a Bexar County Election Judge for several years.

When Donna retired from USAA, she wanted to continue her volunteerism, so she decided to attend clown school (through Northside ISD Adult Community Education programs), and nine weeks later her alter-ego, Donnabelle, was born and she joined the San Antonio Jolly Joeys Clown Alley. From then on, up until just a few days before her diagnosis (her last appearance being the Battle of Flowers parade), Donnabelle has spread joy and laughter to thousands of the young and young-at-heart through the art of clowning.

Widely known and recognized for her “Caring Clown” ministry and philosophy of “Laughter Heals the Heart and Spirit,” she consistently demonstrated it through her daily actions with care and compassion with everyone whom she came in contact. Donna was an active volunteer in both the civilian and military communities. Whether volunteering as Donna or “Donnabelle the Clown,” she was known for giving free hugs whenever it was needed, strived to be positive, upbeat, and agreeable, have a fair attitude, be willing to share ideas, and be available to assist wherever needed. One of her greatest demonstrated assets was the ease in which she interacted and communicated with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other special needs individuals of all ages (and their families), including those with Down syndrome, spina bifida, cancer, autism, ALS, and Alzheimer’s, as well as burn victims and wounded warriors. Across the city, Donnabelle visited nursing homes, assisted living memory care centers; presented programs in schools for Career Days, Drug Awareness, and Character Building; presented literacy-themed Library programs; and served the military community at BAMC, Fisher House, VA Hospital, USO, FSH Child Development Center, and the Invincible Spirit Festival (Gary Sinise Foundation event). Donna received several

recognitions for her commitment and dedication to a wide diversified volunteerism that reaches all ages and needs, including the USAA Golden Eagles Club 2006 Volunteer of the Year Award; Texas Clown Association 2012 Ambassador of Clowning Award; Joint Base San Antonio–Fort Sam Houston 2016 Life Excellence Volunteer Award; and the United Way San Antonio 2016 Volunteer of the Year–Children/Families Award.

Outside of clowning, Donna served as President and held other positions with both the Retired Officers' Wives and Widows Club (ROWWC) and her neighborhood association for several years. She was also a longtime blood and platelet donor.

Donna was preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by her husband, LTC (Ret.) Paul E. Manna; her son, Phillip Manna (Kathy); daughters Sharon Fajkus (Don), Cindy Hacker (George), Barbara Haines (John) and Michelle Kelman (Forrest); seven grandchildren: Amanda, Megan, Allison, Allen, Daniel, Corey, and Jessica; her brother, Burns Gruenewaldt (Sandy); nieces, nephews, and cousins; and countless friends from the neighborhood, USAA, ROWWC, and the Jolly Joeys, along with the many charitable organizations she served. Volunteerism and patriotism, but above all – family, were always a priority in Donna's life, and she raised a family that has been following in those footsteps.

The family wishes to express their sincere appreciation to the staff at Mary Crowley Cancer Research Center (Dallas, Texas), Methodist Hospital Surgical ICU, and Christus Sister Mary Hospice Center for their compassion and care during Donna's brief illness.

A visitation/viewing will be held from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Wednesday, June 13, 2018 at Mission Park North Funeral Chapel (3401 Cherry Ridge), with a funeral mass on Thursday, June 14, 2018, at 9:00 AM at St. Matthew Catholic Church (10703 Wurzbach Road). Interment will follow in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, and a reception will be held back at the church parish hall

afterwards.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the following organizations with which Donna and “Donnabelle” worked closely: Reaching Maximum Independence (RMI); Fisher House (BAMC); U.S.O. San Antonio; Morgan’s Wonderland; San Antonio Food Bank; the USAA Golden Eagle Scholarship Program; and The Children’s Hospital of San Antonio (ChristusHealth).

To honor Donna, regardless if you can attend the viewing or funeral, please wear bright colorful clothing on Wednesday and Thursday.

Her obituary will be posted Sunday in the Express-News, The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel, and the Bay City Tribune.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 13. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Mission Park Funeral Chapels Cherry Ridge
3401 Cherry Ridge Dr
San Antonio, TX 78230
(210) 349-1414
<https://www.missionparks.com/>

Funeral Mass

JUN 14. 9:00 AM (CT)

St. Matthew Catholic Church
10703 Wurzbach Rd
San Antonio, TX 78230

Interment

JUN 14. 10:30 AM (CT)

Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery
1520 Harry Wurzbach
San Antonio, TX 78209

Tribute Wall



“ 33 files added to the album Memories Album



Ben Wolfe - June 14, 2018 at 05:44 AM



Donnabelle (Donna too :)) was such a special person! I don't even have the words, but my daughter (Mac) is special needs and was very active. It seemed like almost everywhere we went there was Donnabelle! I would tease her that she must be cloning herself! We only had the pleasure of meeting Donna once tho, she was so thoughtful and came to visit Mac in the hospital. She had to tell us who she was! We will miss our dear friend! Our condolences! She will be missed by many!

Ben Wolfe - June 14, 2018 at 06:59 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Donna Kaye Manna.



June 13, 2018 at 05:11 PM

SR

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall




Sylvia Rey - June 13, 2018 at 10:57 AM

SR

Our Best Boss ever at USAA!! We will all miss her beautiful smile and our luncheon together. Our Condolences and prayers to all of her family.

Sylvia Rey - June 13, 2018 at 11:07 AM

 David
Arias-
Rios

“ So many beautiful moments in a beautiful life! God Bless
Donnabelle and let's continue her example of Love & Service!



David Arias-Rios - June 13, 2018 at 09:56 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of
Donna Kaye Manna.



June 12, 2018 at 04:33 PM

CL

“ TO THE MANNA FAMILY CARL AND I WERE DEVESTATED TO HEAR THE NEWS ABOUT DONNA. PLEASE KNOW OUR LOVE AND PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU AT THIS VERY SAD TIME. WE HAVE WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF OUR TIMES TOGETHER ESPECIALLY WHEN LIVING AT REDSTONE ARSENAL, HUNTSVILLE, AL. WE ARE SO PROUD OF DONNA AND ALL HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS.WE ARE SO GLAD YOU WERE ABLE TO VISIT LAST SPRING AND WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING TOGETHER AGAIN THIS YEAR. GOD BLESS DONNA AND MAY SHE REST IN PEACE. CARL AND LORETTA LOWERY.



CARL AND LORETTA LOWERY - June 12, 2018 at 02:21 PM

SW

“ Paul,

We were sorry to learn of Donna passing, please know that you and the family are in our thoughts and prayers. She always brought a smile to your Uncle Ludvik whenever you visited or called. I know he was so pleased when she came and preformed at the assisted living for him before he passed. She will be greatly missed by all.

Sydonia & Stacy Winters

Sydonia & Stacy Winters - June 11, 2018 at 01:46 PM

HH

“ The staff at Any Baby Can are so saddened and heartbroken to hear about Donna's passing. She brought so much joy to our children with special needs during our Walk for Autism, Halloween parties and Birthday Socials. She was always so positive and we could always count on her to attend our events to bring joy to our children. We will miss her dearly. Prayers for peace and love for Donna and the family. - Hugo

Hugo Hernandez - June 11, 2018 at 01:25 PM



“ Secret Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Donna Kaye Manna.



June 11, 2018 at 11:14 AM

TG

“ Donnabelle brought so much joy to the children with autism at our Birthday Social parties. She was a ray of sunshine and we could always count on her to make the party fun. Our hearts are broken. We will miss her so much.



Tisha Gonzalez - June 11, 2018 at 10:07 AM

SC

“ I will never forget you, dear dear Donnabelle. My name is now:
Twinkle Dee!!



Sister Mary Claude - June 10, 2018 at 06:49 PM



“ Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the
family of Donna Kaye Manna.



June 08, 2018 at 10:03 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Mission Park Funeral Chapels & Cemetery - June 07, 2018 at 12:13 PM

EM

I was so shock to learn of Dona's passing. What a life of giving to
others.also to see her at the retirement luncheons going around with
her camera.

Eileen Mueller - June 11, 2018 at 07:52 PM

MF

God bless and thank you, Donna and Donnabelle, for spreading joy among so many. My 101-year-old mother, Flora, truly enjoyed you at her birthday celebrations, Jolly Joey events, and, of course, your presence with all of us at the neighborhood association meetings, etc. meant a great deal. Rest in peace.

Arthur, Margaret, & Flora Fernandez

Margaret Fernandez - June 17, 2018 at 04:47 PM