

SUE RYAN-FAZILLEAU

(1955–2012)

MARIE RAMSLAND

Susan Gail Ryan (5 June 1955–5 September 2012) was born in Gosford NSW, the first of three daughters to John Walter Ryan and Moya Oriel (née Goman). Sue received her early primary education at six different schools as her parents moved from place to place after her father's business went bankrupt due to a building recession. She spent the last two and a half years of primary schooling more settled at Artarmon Public School where her mother was appointed as a teacher. She then attended North Sydney Girls High — a selective state school — and matriculated in 1973 to the University of Sydney. In 1976 she graduated with Honours in French (BA) and gained a scholarship to be an *assistante d'anglais* at the Lycée Jean Dautet in La Rochelle where she was to meet her future husband Jacques Fazilleau. They were married on 14 March 1980 and had two daughters: Tamara (b.1984) and Kelly (b.1988).

Sue gained her *Maîtrise d'anglais* (Poitiers) in 1982, the *Agrégation d'anglais* in 1986, the *DEA d'anglais* (Poitiers) in 1989 and her doctorate (Toulouse-le-Mirail) in 1994.

After teaching English at various institutions in La Rochelle, Rochefort and Royan, Sue was appointed in 1990 as a *Professeur agrégé d'anglais* to the La Rochelle *Institut Universitaire de Technologie*. In 1995 she was promoted *Maître de conférences* in the department of *Langues Étrangères Appliquées* of the University of La Rochelle, *Faculté des Lettres*. Having subsequently satisfied the rigorous requirements to qualify for the status of *Professeur des Universités*, she was appointed *Professeur d'anglais et de civilisation australienne* also at the University of La Rochelle in 2009.

Although diagnosed with inoperable large-cell carcinoma in the same year and undergoing intense treatment over the next three years, she continued to carry out the important educational and administrative tasks she had worked particularly hard to put in place at the University of La Rochelle since being appointed there in 1990. In 1995, Sue had established the International

Relations Service at the University and was largely responsible for the organisation and promotion of exchanges for students and teachers in Australia and New Zealand. In Australia, memoranda were signed with the Universities of Sydney, Western Sydney, Newcastle and the Australian National University. These required skilful negotiations at the highest level and resulted in many innovative exchange programmes at La Rochelle which met with outstanding success and internationalised the institution.

I was to appreciate first-hand Sue's many personal and professional qualities when a memorandum of Agreement for Exchange between the Universities of La Rochelle and Newcastle was set up in late 1999. At that time, Sue was looking for someone willing to swap jobs with her for one semester in 2001. Sue prepared me well for my teaching responsibilities there. Her lecture notes on Aboriginal Studies and Maori Studies demonstrated her strong understanding of both cultures.

In 2005 Sue organised a highly successful interdisciplinary conference in La Rochelle; the bilingual peer-reviewed publication of the conference papers (*France et Australie—Regards croisés/ France and Australia—Face to Face, Édition bilingue*, edited by Sue Ryan and Serge Linkès, Paris, Les Indes Savantes, 2008), shows the depth of interest the conference theme engendered in other researchers.

At the same time, paintings by Aboriginal artist Russell Saunders—who was unable to attend the conference—were exhibited in the University library and Sue also organised performances by didgeridoo player and storyteller Mick 'Didj' Davison. This was the first of five major cultural activities organised by Sue during the next five years in and for the community of La Rochelle, involving musicians, artists, authors and academics.

Sue's research findings were also presented at conferences (twenty-six papers from 2001 to 2009). She organised several more conferences in La Rochelle and participated in others held in various parts of France, in England, India, Hungary, the United States and Australia. Her doctoral thesis was revised and up-dated for L'Harmattan, Paris. It was published in 2007 as *Peter Carey et la quête post-coloniale d'une identité australienne*. Other publications (in Paris, Switzerland, London, Amsterdam, Australia) include sixteen peer-reviewed articles, five book chapters, three book reviews. Sue also co-edited conference publications and was busy with one a couple of days before she died.

According to her sister Lynette Anne Ryan (b.1957), Sue had ‘boundless energy and enthusiasm for everything she did’. At a Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving for her life held on 13 October 2012 at St Luke’s Anglican Church, Hornsby Heights, her youngest sister Cheryl ‘Cherie’ Joy Low (b.1961) spoke of Sue’s ‘unending devotion to all things Australian’ and considered her to be ‘a great ambassador of Australian studies’. Her daughter Kelly acknowledged her mother’s dedication to her family, her neighbours, friends, colleagues and students. Many others touched by Sue, either academically or personally, could attest to these aspects of her personality and her achievements.

A Memorial Service was held for Sue in the Protestant Temple of La Rochelle on Friday, 7 September, 2012. Speaking on behalf of the University and herself, Joëlle Bonnevin (*Chargée de mission, Accompagnement Social et Santé des étudiants*) summarised Sue’s achievements in France and spoke of the deep friendships she established with all who knew her. She told also of Sue’s determination and dedication to her work and of the brilliance of her results as she built her career in the French university system.

Joëlle Bonnevin underlined the importance of Sue’s work as *Chargée de mission* for international relations at La Rochelle University and her research work on Peter Carey, crime fiction, colonialism and post-colonialism, as well as on the representation of Aboriginality in literature and cinematography.

She was an outstanding and much-loved teacher, a generous friend and gifted communicator who continued to be engaged with her friends, colleagues and students until the end of her life.

The University of Newcastle