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## GSHS Class of 1981 Remembers Murdered Classmate



Pictured before the 25<sup>th</sup> year reunion of the GSHS Class of 1981 are John Denis, Sallie Jordan Rohrbach, Tracy Rowe Comer and Donna Jones Combs. (photo provided by Tracy Rowe Comer)

Contributed by Sherry O'Neal

For members of the Garner Senior High School Class of 1981, Sallie Jordan Rohrbach was much more than "a state worker" who was the victim of a tragic murder in Charlotte.

Several class members stepped up with stories about Sallie's life better explain who Sallie was and to honor her memory.

Tina Hunt Canfield says she remembers "Sallie as far back as elementary school and how she was always willing to do anything

for anybody. She embodied all of the character traits that we would want in our very best friend."

Tommy Stancil, who grew up in the same area as Sallie and had many of the same friends in school, remembers five to eight people who would pile into a car to go off-campus for lunch. "I had not seen her [Sallie] in a few years, but my heart just sank when I found out it was her." She had a quick humor and will be missed, he adds.

Randy Blalock, who rode the same school bus with Sallie for years, remembers when she first started school and the bus stop was in front of his house. He remembers she was a petite blonde who was smiling, the same smile she had as a senior.

Lori Poole Townsend credits Sallie with helping her pass pre-algebra in Mabel Jones' class. Townsend said Sallie sat right beside her and always kept her stocked with notebook paper, "sea-n-ski" Chap Stick and tutored her in math as well.

Tracy Rowe Comer, who now lives in Wisconsin, had reconnected with Sallie in 2006 and says "she was definitely still the same Sallie-spunky, always smiling, full of life and good cheer, bright and quick-witted. I know she loved animals

and had many pets, loved country music and enjoyed travel. Sallie had a heart even bigger than those huge brown eyes of hers, and went out of her way to do kind things for others. I am sure she touched many lives in her 44 years."

A former neighbor, Donna Wilkinson Hardin, remembers that long before there was a Do-Not-Call List for telemarketers or caller ID in every home, Sallie had figured out a way to spot and avoid unsolicited phone calls. She and Tim, her husband, decided to put their home phone number in their dog's name so that way when someone called and asked for the dog, they would immediately recognize the call as a telemarketer and could say he was not there. "She had a huge heart and she was really a giver in the world or at least her neighborhood." For close friends, Sallie's presence will be sorely missed. In fact, the Wednesday night that she went missing, she was expected to visit another classmate, Mary Ann Kyles Ingram, who lives near Charlotte with her husband J.W. and their six children. J.W. Ingram writes that he first met Sallie more than 20 years ago. His best memories are not from 20 years ago but from the past year. He says that several times during the past year Sallie would visit when she was in Monroe for

work. Most times she would bring them supper. "She would usually bring in pizza in one hand and Diet Pepsi in the other. She had a smile that would light up the room with an easy going demeanor that put people at ease. And our children adored her." Ingram adds, "The Insurance Department and the state of North Carolina should be proud to have an employee this dedicated and professional working for the citizens of this state and not in private business. To most of Charlotte she was an insurance auditor from Raleigh that went missing and turned up murdered. But we knew her, and remember her, not as a victim of senseless crime or a murder statistic or just another sad and heartbreaking news story. We remember her as our friend and we will miss her very much." Classmate Donna Jones Combs shared this quotation by Mother Teresa, "Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless." Combs says, "The thing I remember most about her was her warm heart to creatures great and small and her bubbly, upbeat personality. In her presence, the negativity of the world in general melted away into a calmness." Sallie always had a smile and hello for everyone. She will be missed.