

Dedication to Dr. Sue A. Ferguson



Picture caption: Sue sailing on Lake Washington, September 2005.

This book is dedicated to Dr. Sue A. Ferguson, atmospheric scientist, friend and colleague, visionary, and enthusiastic participant in life. We lost Sue to breast cancer on December 18, 2005, on a beautiful, crisp, blue-sky Seattle day. Her memory and inspiration continue to live on, however, in the legacy she founded in the atmospheric science community: first in her 13-year career in Avalanche Forecasting, then in her 13-year career as a Research Meteorologist with the USDA Forest Service.

Sue thought big, never hesitating to tackle difficult problems or situations. She saw the potential of what could be accomplished by bringing together brilliant and dedicated people to push the boundaries of science and the imagination. As an Avalanche Forecaster, she started the

Avalanche Review, now a premier publication in the field. As a Research Meteorologist with the Forest Service she was a member of the Fire and Environmental Research Applications (FERA) Team and then went on to found the Atmosphere and Fire Interactions Research and Engineering (AirFIRE) Team. Her vision led to the development of the BlueSky Smoke Prediction System—a system on the forefront of technology and innovation that provides real-time predictions of smoke concentrations from prescribed fires, wildfires, and agricultural fires. Sue helped form the Northwest Regional Modeling Center (NWRMC) that provides daily scientific products for the fire weather, meteorological, and air quality communities and serves as a template for other regional modeling consortiums nationally. In addition to all these accomplishments, Sue still loved to encourage and participate in hands-on science, leading field campaigns (with a tether sonde affectionately known as “Wally”) to measure smoke and meteorological parameters during fires and mentoring young high school future-scientists-of-the-world. Sue touched many lives, and we are all the better for knowing her and her pioneering spirit.