

Darienite

News for Darien

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Jean Brown, 88, Former Darien Resident, Longtime Volunteer

Author : David Gurliacci

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Date : January 23, 2017

Jean Hoel Brown, 88, beloved wife of the late Willard Wilkins Brown for 60 years, cherished mother, longtime humanitarian, and community volunteer, passed away peacefully on Dec. 30, 2016, at the Morristown Medical Center surrounded by her family.

Jean was born on May 28, 1928, in Grand Junction, Colo., to Sidney and Louise Rice Hoel. Jean graduated from Grand Junction High School and attended Colorado College for two years before transferring to the University of Colorado to pursue a major in journalism. Upon graduation, she moved to New York, where she was employed by Conde Nast as a copywriter for Vogue Magazine.

Jean met decorated Naval veteran Bill Brown through mutual friends at the Jersey Shore. The couple was married on Sept. 12, 1953 in Grand Junction. After two years in Darien, they settled permanently in Far Hills, N.J., where they built Pheasant Ridge Farm.

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While raising their four children, Jean helped maintain the farm consisting of sheep, chickens, horses, and cats, and she was never without a dog by her side, whether it be a beagle, a retriever, or her beloved Norfolk terriers. Jean was a dedicated volunteer and a generous philanthropist.

She worked tirelessly as a board member of the Virginia Day Summer Camp and was subsequently involved with Camp Brett-Endeavor. Both camps were established to introduce inner-city youths to nature and the countryside.

— [This obituary](#) previously was published in the Newark Star-Ledger

Along with her work for the camps, Jean served as an honorary board member of the Plaid House. It is an organization that provides a safe and stable environment for young girls, enabling them to pursue better lives through education. Jean also supported St. Luke's Church, Far Hills Country Day School, and the Visiting Nurse Association in their fundraising efforts.

As a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Jean developed a keen interest in early American furniture and silver. Her other interests included music, ballet, and Broadway theater. She played the piano and especially treasured her longtime subscription to the New York Philharmonic. Her family fondly remembers when Jean accompanied her sons backstage at a Grateful Dead concert.

Jean's love of travel and wildlife led her on many global adventures, from safaris in Africa to viewing polar bears in the Arctic Circle and endangered species in the Galapagos Islands. She enjoyed her family's summer vacations to Nantucket, always combing the beaches to collect prized shells and sea glass. She was an avid horseback rider and skier.

Jean, as a passionate gardener, planted and tended her annual vegetable and flower gardens. She was the ultimate fan, rarely missing an opportunity to watch her children and grandchildren in their athletic endeavors. Clad in their raccoon coats, Jean and Bill were especially at home rink side at the Essex Hunt club, watching their children and grandchildren play ice hockey.

Jean was predeceased by her husband, Bill, in 2013. She is survived by her three sons, Willard Jr. (Buzz) and his wife, Nicole, Clinton and his wife, Crashy, and Timothy and his wife, Karolee; and daughter, Kimberly Morrow and her husband, David, as well as her 10 grandchildren, Anna, Perrin, Spencer, George, Anabel, Porter, Augusta, Piper, Buzzy, and Boden.

She will be deeply missed by her family and remembered for her beautiful spirit, love of animals, kind generosity, contagious smile and joie de vivre.

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Donations in her memory may be made to the Plainfield Area Humane Society at pahsnj.org, or 75 Rock Ave., Plainfield, N.J. 07063. A memorial service will be held on April 21 at St. Luke's Church in Gladstone, N.J.