



Jean Annette Casper

June 30, 1937 - July 28, 2024

Jean Annette Casper (née Braxton), 87, of Milwaukee passed away peacefully in her sleep on Sunday, July 28, 2024. The cause was complications of mixed vascular and Alzheimer's dementia.

Jean was preceded in death by her mother, Kathleen McGeachy Braxton, and her brother, Daniel Webster Braxton, Jr. She is survived by her husband of 59 years, Dennis Casper, and her daughter, Kathleen Casper.

Jean was born on June 30, 1937, in Chipley, Fla., into a large, extended family on her mother's side. After graduating from Chipley High School, she attended Florida State University, majoring in art education and graduating in 1959. She became certified as a mathematics teacher and taught mathematics and Spanish in Florida and Alabama before joining the Peace Corps in 1963.

During her training for the Peace Corps at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., she met her future husband, Dennis. He had recently graduated from Cornell and was the administrative assistant in the training program.

The Peace Corps sent Jean to Quito, Ecuador. When an anticipated teaching position fell through because of political unrest there, she was hired to work in the library of Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador, part of a U.S. Agency for International Development program to modernize the library. Jean quickly

took to library work, which became her lifelong vocation.

Dennis and Jean married in January 1965 and lived in Urbana, Ill., where Dennis was pursuing a degree in philosophy at the University of Illinois. Jobs for graduate student wives were difficult to obtain, but thanks to her experiences in Ecuador, plus her fluency in Spanish, Jean got a sought-after job with a Latin American library resources program. Concurrently she completed a master's in library science and began working on a master's in art history.

In 1970, Jean and Dennis moved to Milwaukee, where he took a position on the faculty in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Their daughter, Kathleen, was born that year as well.

When Kathleen started kindergarten at the Alverno [College] Campus Elementary School, Jean began volunteering as a librarian and was eventually hired, a position she held for eight years. In the mid-1980s, she moved to Longfellow Middle School in Wauwatosa, from which she retired in 1999. She was gratified to be able to share her love of learning and books with the students at both Alverno and Longfellow.

Jean was an intellectually curious woman with wide-ranging interests. During those years, she also completed her master's in art history. Throughout her life, she was interested in genealogy and became an expert at genealogical research, pursuing in particular her own Scottish family history. She excelled at telling family stories. She was active with the Milwaukee County Genealogical Society and took several research trips with other members.

In retirement, Jean and Dennis took up birdwatching. In addition to weekly bird walks at the Urban Ecology Center, they traveled widely, to Ecuador, Costa Rica, Baja California, Mexico, and throughout the U.S.

Jean appreciated beauty both in nature and the arts. She was a lifelong

concert and theater-goer, with particular interests in early classical music and in Shakespeare. She played the piano and was a talented artist, painting in oil and watercolor, and sketching in pen and ink. She was knowledgeable about the decorative arts and collected beautiful things, including rummage-sale treasures.

Jean was acutely aware of issues of racial and economic inequality, and was a staunch believer in racial, social and economic justice. She was a very loving person and cherished her close, loving friendships with people of diverse backgrounds.

Memorials in Jean's name may be sent to the Great Waters Group of the Sierra Club, the Urban Ecology Center, or the Milwaukee Public Library.

A celebration of Jean's life will be held at a later date. Details will appear closer to the event on the website of Northshore Funeral Services, <https://www.northshorefuneral.com>

A celebration of her life will take place on
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025 at 3:00 p.m.
St. Rita's Square Senior Community (in the "Trattoria")
728 E. Pleasant Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202

Jean's life will be celebrated through music which she loved:

**Scottish tunes performed by the Celtic band Frogwater

**Songs from works by Handel performed by singers from the Florentine Opera Company

Refreshments will be served.

(Questions? Contact Dennis at 414-975-8720 or dcasper@uwm.edu.)

Previous Events

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

FEB **21**. 3:00 AM (CT)

St. Rita's Square Senior Community (in the "Trattoria")
728 E. Pleasant Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Tribute Wall

JW

“Dennis and Kathleen, You wrote such a wonderful obituary for Jean! I knew she was talented in genealogy and history but never knew the MANY other talents she had. It was heartwarming to read Jean's story.

I was one of her genealogy group which included Pat Hoffmann and Nancy Torphy. We four traveled to many places in our never-completed search for our ancestors. We've been to Salt Lake City several times and all four of us were standing in line with our loads of paperwork before the library opened (this was before much of our work could be documented on the computer) and we stayed till it closed in the evening. Then we returned to our hotel room to discuss our findings or lack thereof. I clearly remember Jean's search for her McGeachy ancestors and also how great Jean was at giving us insightful ideas on how we might search for our problem ancestors. In addition to traveling to SLC, we four went to UW-Madison's library and our Milwaukee library in our constant search. In particular, I clearly remember one Saturday trip to Madison when it was my turn to drive after a very deep snowfall the night before. After digging out my driveway and picking up the girls, I learned my car's defroster didn't work. But did that deter us?? Not at all! Someone (I think it was Nancy) used a credit card to scratch the frost off my inside window and Jean and Pat in the back seat told me when I could change lanes! The trip home was less dramatic as the weather had cleared but we all loved the times we spent searching for our ancestors. So now, after a lifetime of searching for her ancestors, Jean is finally able to meet them and put the missing pieces together. Bravo, Jean, for a life well-lived! Jean Walters

Jean Walters - August 13, 2024 at 12:21 PM

CW

“ I second what Suzy said and add that it was a delight to travel with Jean because of her calm demeanor and intense curiosity about wherever we were and whatever we were doing. Here she is in Ecuador in August 2007.



Carolyn Washburne - August 07, 2024 at 06:43 PM

SH

“ When I first starting birding at the UEC several years ago, Jean was one of the first to welcome me and to take me under her gentle wing (pun intended.) She shared both her knowledge and her kind spirit with me, making me feel fully included. I loved hearing her sparkling laugh and her soft Florida accent, and I always happier after spending time with her. Later, when I became part of the book club with her and Dennis, I was often struck by her distinctive observations. Both her comments and her book choices often pushed me to perceptions I would not have had on my own. I will always be grateful that I had the chance to be part of her life.

Suzy Clarkson Holstein - August 05, 2024 at 02:29 PM

TC

“ I was her neighbor accross the street and I loved her. What I want you to know is that you have my sincere condolences. I want to share a humorous story. I remember discussing the Civil War with her and she always called it the "northern aggression"., which made me laugh.

*With my deepest sympathy,
Toni Carroll*

Toni Carroll - August 02, 2024 at 09:48 PM

LH

“ Bill and I remember the good times we had with Jean and Dennis camping and birding. Jean always had something interesting to talk about. Lavinia Heaton

Lavinia Heaton - August 02, 2024 at 08:29 PM