

Katharine "Kay" Parker (1918 - 2014)



Juneau lost its best supporter and biggest booster on May 13, when Kay Parker passed away in Seattle. Born in Bangor, Maine on August 15, 1918, Katharine (Kay) led an eventful life that took her from her New England roots across the country with her husband Larry to a rustic life in the Territory of Alaska.

She and Larry met at and graduated from St. Johnsbury Academy in Vermont – and the school and town remained close to her heart. She returned there most recently at ages 85 and 90 to visit high school girlfriends. Kay also graduated from University of New Hampshire.

Larry fell in love with the new frontier while serving on a cable ship in Alaska during the war and convinced Kay to move there in 1946. They were part of a wave of WW II veterans who settled in Juneau and became lifelong friends. It was an exciting time to live in the Territory and to be involved in the movement for statehood. Kay was honored to become the "First Lady" of Juneau when Larry was elected as mayor for two terms.

Kay and Larry were married for 60 years and spent most of those years in the home they built on Lena Cove near Juneau. In 2001 they moved to The Lakeshore in Seattle where they made many new friends and continued to see Alaskans as they passed through the area. Larry died in 2003.

Kay was a woman with a boundless heart and an indomitable spirit and she was a role model of thoughtfulness and generosity. She loved to keep in touch through letters and long phone calls and always remembered friends' birthdays and milestones. She loved lobster in Maine, lilacs in Vermont, the coves and waters of S.E. Alaska, king crab, gabbing, Fourth of July fireworks echoing off the mountains of Gastineau Channel, arguing about politics, sewing club, and all types of wildlife - especially birds, keeping up with grandkids and great-grandchildren who adored her, and reading a good book on a rainy day...or any day for that matter .

She is survived by three daughters, Wendy Swedell (husband Ralph) of Juneau, Laurie Zumsteg (John) of Renton, Wa. and Peggy Albin (Tom) of Bellevue, Wa. Loving grandchildren include: Seawan Gehlbach (Andy Craig), Derek Zumsteg, Craig Zumsteg (Annie), Larry Mattson (Jenny), Brent Mattson (Lisa), Jamie Albin, Larrisa Swedell and ten great-grandchildren.

We appreciate all the tender care and concern provided by the staffs of The Lakeshore, Dr. Howard Miller and the Kline Galland home.

Remembrances may be sent to St. Johnsbury Academy, where Kay's father was an inspirational principal for twelve years (The Stanley Oldham Award, St. Johnsbury Academy, PO Box 906, St. Johnsbury, Vermont 05819).