

Claire Hubbell Pierce, 78, of Sutton, Vt., passed peacefully on March 24, 2007. She is survived by her husband, Cedric "Bruz" Pierce; children, Leigh Hurley, Tracy Pierce Lockwood, and Javin "Jay" Pierce; and three grandchildren, Nils Pierce Reid, Briggs Pierce, and Story Reynolds Pierce. Claire was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and survived her last five months painlessly at home with her husband and children caring for her, and loving neighbors and friends comforting her. Claire was born in Woodridge, N.J., the daughter of Briggs and Henrietta Hubbell. Briggs was a manager of Brooks Brothers clothiers in New York and as a singer and musician he got Claire started on stage at the age of 3 years, with a Ziegfeld Follies outfit, and her gift of perfect pitch. Her singing career ranged from performing with jazz vocal arranger Dave Lambert of Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, to veterans in hospitals during World War II. She also participated in a volunteer morale-boosting effort providing tender letters of courage and hope to servicemen overseas who had no one else to correspond with. Claire was an executive secretary at Matson Steamship Lines in Manhattan, partying at the famous Stork Club, charming all with her beauty, glamour and kindness. In 1952, Claire fell in love with Bruz, a naval officer on leave. It was love at first sight. They were married months later and nested in Sutton, rebuilding a 200-year-old farmhouse. While raising three children, Claire gave her spare time to the community, offering help to those in need, still singing all the way. At parties, her many friends knew she could be counted on to sing a few rousing songs, always ending them with a beautiful smile. She and Bruz adored world travel, cross-country ski parties, church suppers and good intellectual banter. In the years when Bruz was teaching at St. Johnsbury Academy, Claire was hired by Aime's Restaurant to sing and entertain in nightclub style, an act that drew many of their Academy friends and others from the St. Johnsbury area for an evening of dining and fun. Because of her business background, she was asked by the nationwide Hubbell Family organization, of which she was a member, to serve as secretary. She and Bruz attended several of their get-togethers throughout the country and kept up on the latest Hubble Space ventures. She served as Caledonia

Home Health Agency's coordinator when it started its new R.S.V.P. organization 20 years ago. Claire often said she was not accepted by Vermonters until she started to sing in the choir at the West Burke Methodist Church. She had the voice of an angel. She has never left their hearts. A memorial service will be held at West Burke Church, June 24, followed by a party celebrating her life at their new home on Sutton North Ridge. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Caledonia Home Health in thanks for their incomparable devotion and support.