

BARBARA JANE FERRALL

August 29, 1938 - April 25, 2024



Barbara Jane Ferrall passed away unexpectedly at the age of 85 in Upper St. Clair, Pennsylvania, on April 25, 2024.

Born to parents Michael and Erma Seaman on August 29, 1938, in Norristown, Pennsylvania, Barbara was the middle of three children. She is predeceased by her beloved siblings, brother Jack, and sister Lois.

After meeting at the Wissahickon Racquet Club playing badminton in Philadelphia, Barbara married Fritz Kalhammer of Bavaria, Germany in 1962 eventually moving to Southern California, followed by Northern California. While raising their three daughters Carley, Margaret (Meg) and Allison in Menlo Park, Barbara embarked on her dream of becoming an attorney. A mother in her 40s going back to school with fellow students half her age was extraordinarily rare back then. Despite the odds, Barbara graduated summa cum laude from the College of Notre Dame in 1980, and earned her Juris Doctor from the Santa Clara University School of Law in 1983 as a prestigious Regents Scholar. Admitted to the bar in 1984, Barbara practiced Family Law in San Jose, followed by Business Law, working her way up to Partner at Irvine & Cooper in Palo Alto.

But her greatest career joy was the work she did for the underserved while working at the Santa Clara Pro Bono Project. Barbara was a champion for the underdog and took great pleasure in correcting injustices for the people who could least afford legal counsel. If Barbara was your attorney, you were lucky. She was a powerful advocate for her clients and would stop at nothing to make sure their wrongs were righted.

Her family was especially important to Barbara. Even after her divorce from Fritz in 2000, her relationship with his family ran deep; she had had an endearing relationship with his mother, Gerda, and continued to love her 8 German nieces and nephews from afar. Her American nieces and nephews also held a very special place in her heart. She loved her visits with them all and enjoyed their Jersey Shore vacations, lounging on the beach in the warm sun. She was also fiercely loyal to her friends and maintained close relationships, some as far back at grade school in Norristown.

Known to most back home as Jane, she found love again with Tom Ferrall, an old friend from late teenage years, and they married in 2001. They lived in Mt. Lebanon and most recently Upper St. Clair, suburbs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Together they enjoyed travel in Europe, spending winter months in Boca Raton, Florida, and taking many trips throughout the US to visit friends and family, until Tom's death in 2019.

Those who knew Barbara best will tell you she was a force of nature, and dual-natured at that - a rare mix of spice and nice, class and sass. She could be tough as nails, but underneath it all she had a very tender heart. If you only knew one side, you probably couldn't imagine the other. You often didn't need to "ask" Barbara for her opinion, and when she gave it to you, you could be sure that her advice was well thought out and spot on. Her magnetic personality attracted friends wherever she went in life. She was highly intelligent, well read, interesting, kind, funny and fun to be around.

In her younger years, Barbara loved to entertain. She was a phenomenal cook and a stylish host. Her daughters remember well polishing silver and ironing linen napkins before many a dinner party and bridge party. Among the many favorite recipes she handed down to her daughters is her family's Lithuanian cabbage soup (kopustu sriuba), a simple but irresistible comfort food. The family joke was that half of it was eaten before it was even finished on the stove because her daughters would sneak into the kitchen for bites when no one was looking. Barbara also loved to garden. She had two green thumbs, which ran on her side of the family. She cultivated gorgeous rose gardens at every home she ever had, taking tremendous joy from nursing them, feeding them, talking to them and watching them grow.

Barbara was intensely civic-minded, beyond her work as a lawyer. She was a big believer in giving back, and generously supported many charities throughout her life. She taught English as a Second Language (ESL), hosted a foreign exchange student from Japan for a year, and continued her volunteerism well into her 70s. She was a docent for The Frick Pittsburgh Museum, a volunteer driver for the local Older Persons Transportation (OPT), and an unrelenting advocate for animals, including endangered wolves and the deer being inhumanely culled in Mt. Lebanon in recent years.

Tall, strong and strategic, Barbara was a competitive athlete in her younger days, in everything from field hockey, basketball and tennis to swimming, skiing and hiking. She found mental games just as invigorating. She was an avid life long bridge player, eagerly collecting her Master Points, and also loved a good jigsaw puzzle. On any given morning, you'd find Jane with her cup of coffee and the New York Times. She was a crossword puzzle aficionado, blazing through even the hardest of the week on Sundays, in pen, never pencil ("You need to commit"). She loved Scrabble as well, the one game she was willing "to go digital" for, playing family and friends on her iPad, almost always winning. She was a voracious reader of history books, cultural books, fiction, nonfiction, Michael Connelly detective novels, even cookbooks. Her own grammar was impeccable. God forbid you ever texted Jane using improper or lazy grammar. Instead of a text reply back, you'd get an email with grammar corrections, often ending it with, "That'll be \$50 for the English lesson."

In later years, her daughters and twin grandchildren (Alexandra and Loucas) spoiled Mom/Gamma with family trips to Los Angeles, Lake Tahoe, a beach house in Cape May, NJ, Puerto Vallarta and most recently a trip to celebrate Easter together. The twins were especially dear to her, having been present for their birth in 2006 in Los Angeles. She maintained a close relationship with both grandchildren through texts, phone calls, and family trips. Each of her daughters were very close to Barbara and loved her beyond measure. She will never be forgotten and live on in our hearts forever.

Barbara Jane is survived by her three daughters: Carley, Meg and Allison (and Allison's husband Patrick O'Malley Daly, Barbara's unabashed favorite Irish son-in-law); her only grandchildren Alexandra and Loucas; adored nieces and nephews - Michael Ellis, Marnie (Ellis) Marini, Mark Ellis, Sherry Bard and Debbie Yakscoe; and her last remaining cousin, Tom Abromaitis, who meant the world to her.

If so moved, donations may be made 'In Memory of Barbara Jane Ferrall' to one of her favorite charities:

Southern Poverty Law Center
Berea College
Sierra Club
SPCA


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