

JANET ANN WAGNER



Janet Wagner's laugh started at the tips of her toes and emerged as a roar. Fun, warm, earnest and sincere... that was Jan. She loved people and found lots of ways to enjoy spending time with them. Weeknight tennis games then dinner at the Elbow Room in Shadyside. Nine-hole golf matches on warm summer nights followed by dinner on Longue Vue Club's Pink Terrace. Fourth of July parties on Mt.

Washington with hot dogs and loud, patriotic tunes. A theme quickly emerges of Jan – friends, family, good food and maybe a glass or two of white wine.

Golf buddy Betsy Deiseroth remembers Jan completing her very first round of 18 holes, having taken up golf later in life. Beaming, she emerged from the green and proudly announced her score: 162!

"In that moment I really admired her because she told her score honestly and admitted it proudly. I might have put the clubs back in the closet but she continued playing for the rest of her life. Her enthusiasm was endearing," Betsy said.

A Mercer County native, Jan graduated from Greenville High School, followed by a bachelor's degree at Grove City College. But she was a Pittsburgher through and through. She read the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette from cover to cover, watched the local evening news, listened to Pittsburgh Pirates games on KDKA radio, never missed a Steelers game, hopped a shuttle bus from the former Pittsburgh Athletic Association to Pitt football games for many years and is the undisputed number one fan of Jim Cunningham, artistic director of WQED-FM and his show.

Jan passed away on Wednesday, February 19, from complications following a fire in her Mt. Washington apartment building.

Jan spent the first ten years of her career at the former Mellon Bank. She came across an intriguing employment opportunity – The Hillman Company was searching for an executive secretary for Chairman Henry Hillman – and she decided to apply. They clicked and Jan remained his trusted and loyal assistant for 44 and a half years.

She loved working for Mr. Hillman, a man she greatly admired. The position also afforded her some fun perks. As a civic leader, many invitations to local galas came across his desk. He offered Jan many of these invitations when he and his wife, Elsie, were unable to attend.

Enter James G. "Jimmy" Dunn.

Jan and Jimmy, a Downtown estate lawyer, bumped into each other often as they joined a crowd of up to 15 mutual friends lunching at the Colonnade Cafeteria in the iconic Union Trust Building. Discovering their shared attraction, Jan suddenly had an escort to some of the region's most elegant formal events and Jimmy had a devoted companion for the remaining 33 years of his life. They sailed the Caribbean every Christmas with friends, toured Scotland and Ireland, traveled the United States and visited other parts of the world. Jan was a member of the Junior League of Pittsburgh and of Shadyside Presbyterian Church.

Their active social life afforded Jan the opportunity to display her snazzy dressing style. She loved bold colors, beautiful knits, elegant prints and had handbags, shoes and jewelry to complement each outfit. Jan's sister, Charlotte Beukema, was affiliated with the sophisticated Vendome Salon on the top floor of Kaufmann's department store and often used her discerning eye to select many of Jan's beautiful pieces. She never owned a pair of yoga pants, sweat suits, denim or any piece of clothing approximating leisure wear.

Jan lived by simple values...be a good friend and you'll have friends for life. She enriched the lives of many people, young, old and several now deceased. She wrote beautiful thank you notes in her flourishing handwriting, remembered her extended family with funny birthday cards and had a genuine curiosity of the activities of her family and friends. She freely embraced as her own the families of Jimmy and her brother-in-law, Henry Beukema, welcoming their new spouses and babies with joy and affection as each joined the family.

Charlotte recalled a time when she and Jan decided to trick Mr. Hillman. It was Halloween night, and he went home early to greet trick-or-treaters. The sisters donned costumes, Jan dressing as a ghost to obscure any chance he would know who she was.

"I told her, You can't open your mouth because he'll immediately know it's you," Charlotte warned. "But he kept asking us questions and Jan couldn't contain herself any longer. She let out one of her laughs and that was it."

She is survived by her sister, Charlotte Beukema (Henry); and nieces and nephews.

Interment is private. A Memorial service will be held in June at Shadyside Presbyterian Church. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Janet Wagner Scholarship Endowment payable to Grove City College, 100 Campus Drive, Grove City, PA 16127.

Arrangements by **JOHN A. FREYVOGEL SONS INC.**
(freyvogelfuneralhome.com)

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb