

THE TASTE OF LIFE – A TRIBUTE TO JEAN MERRIFIELD



~ photo from *Blake Camp*

REGRETFULLY, I never had the pleasure of enjoying **Jean Merrifield's** famous Trifle Dessert. As others were queuing up with smacking lips at the dessert table, I was always left to look over the other less popular sweets, anything that didn't contain my only food nemesis - whipped cream. I was certainly the outsider at the dessert table.

But I did have the opportunity to share some of the other delights offered by Jean over the years that I knew her. When Heather Fraser Fawcett and I composed a Sunday service to celebrate Jean's 100-Year Birthday, I interviewed her in her apartment one Sunday afternoon over tea. Jean had a directness of expressing herself that one can only admire and envy. If you asked her a question, you might as well be prepared for an answer that might surprise you.

I asked Jean, 'What do you believe?'. She looked at me straight in the eye and without missing a beat said:

I still believe what I was brought up to believe:
I believe in the leadership of Jesus. Right!
I believe in the brotherhood of man. Right!
And I believe in the Fatherhood of God. Right!

Jean Merrifield was just turning 100 years and I was still a young, mid-70s impressionable young man to her. We discussed this at great length and this resulted in Jean's gift to me, her legacy to us all.

Learn to listen carefully to others, especially those who have the experience of the years... Listen as much to what the heart is saying, even when the words don't couple with your own comfortably.

Lastly, when Jean and I were both suffering from the Shingles Virus at the same time, Jean called me to commiserate over this very painful time for both of us.

Did she call because she knew that Jesus, in his time, comforted the sick?

In the Brotherhood of Man, did she want to express our commonality in bad times as well as good?

And the Fatherhood of God: "That whatever else God may be or not, God is Love and even if we reject belief in God at all, we can still believe in the power of Love" (*quote from U.U. Theologian Stefan Jonasson*)

~ **Paul Sullivan**



WE ARE so sorry to hear this! **Jean Merrifield** was such a pleasure to have met, even though we obviously did not know her as well as other parishioners. So wonderful to have heard bits and pieces of her wisdom and her gratitude towards life.

We send our condolences to Jean's family and to all who knew her caring soul more closely. I feel at a loss for words other than we are grateful to have met Jean and we wish the best for all people who grieve her. We are thankful for some memories with Jean, she was always so kind to us and she seemed to love Mischa! Mischa was very happy to see her when she was able to.

Jessica's photo of lovely little Mischa with Jean – the eldest and youngest LUUCers

~ Jessica Shirley

I LOVED Jean because she projected strength and cheerfulness, even though there must have been many days when she felt otherwise. She was *such* a powerful force, she inspired the rest of us to be strong and cheerful too, at least as much as we could at any given time in our complicated lives. Such is the power of goodness and character for the betterment of all. Jean's memory will continue to bolster us as we navigate our future as a congregation. Bless you and thank you, Jean.

~ Nancy Schmidt



*Taken at the March 28th service 2021
~ photo from Blake Camp*



*Cutting Jean's 100th Birthday Cake
with Paul and Heather FF
~ photo from Christopher*



*Jean at a Christmas bazaar with **James Sisley** inspecting the goodies, **Kerry-Anne** sampling the goodies and dear **Peg Wooley** selling the goodies.*

Jean always contributed to our bazaars by making mince tarts and shortbread. She also made one of her famous trifles for the raffle.

***Mother's Day Lunch.** Jean was thrilled to be led into the lunch by **Comac Lutes** – who, she said was a 'perfect gentleman'.*

*Here she is thanking the gents who did all the cooking. Visible are **Tim Byrnes, Gabor Matyas, Philip Prince, Derek Prince, Alex Kostiuk** and **James Sisley**.*



*Jean at **Kerry-Anne** and **Michael's** cottage on **Lake Macdonald** with **Nancy Graham**, listening dreamily to **Kerry-Anne's** music.*



*Jean with friend **Barbara** at **Susan's Summer BBQ** with **Bogdan Czarnocki** and **Irene Hausknost***

*~ photos by **Sheila Laursen***





JOSE makes a trifle! Jose van Amerongen dared to ask **Jean** how to make a trifle. “Right”, says Jean, “come over to mine and I’ll show you.” The ingredients were all laid out in order and a pen and pad were handy. “Write this down or you will forget” came the orders.

And suddenly Jean had turned into a 104-year-old sergeant major! – she stood there, arms akimbo, and the trifle making began. Now, there are lots of parts to trifle making and you start with the sponge cakes. These must be placed just so in the bowl and cut just so – Jose complied. Then came the fruit and nuts – “cut them smaller than that” – came the instructions. Jose meekly complied. Then

came the sherry which Jose gingerly dribbled into the bowl. “More than that – much more than that,” said Jean – “I have a reputation to uphold!” So, Jose sloshed in a whole lot more. Then came the custard part – this has to be religiously stirred or it burns and lumps – Jose religiously stirred and gently poured it into the bowl. While this ‘set’ Jose and Jean had tea - and Jean returned to her normal caring self. All that remained to finish the trifle was the cream to be whipped and slathered on top.

The creation was taken to the church the next day for pot luck – and everyone congratulated **Jean** on the wonderful trifle she had made!

~ ed
~ photo by Selina

JEAN was an unforgettable woman - not just for her agility at her age, but also for her wit, her wonderful memory bank of stories from years long before most of us were born, and her ability to put into succinct wording, the hallmark wisdom and caring that were such a part of her personality, character, values and perspectives on life, and living... Her determination and tenacity always humbled me.... especially when she made 104 shortbread 'gifts' for friends and neighbours - to celebrate her OWN 104th birthday!! And I will continue to carry in my heart and mind, her "mantra" that she shared with us when presenting a Thanksgiving Day service - of "Aging Gratefully". I will try to live up to that, and if I can, I will feel blessed.

~ **Sheila Tustin Laursen**



I WAS SO saddened to learn of **Jean's** passing. I greatly appreciate you letting me know. She was a remarkable lady who truly worked her way into our hearts. I only met her two years ago but felt like I had known her forever. She was a true inspiration in so many ways.”

~ **Francis Scarpaleggia, MP**

“As long as we remember a person, they're not really gone. Their thoughts, their feelings, their memories, they become a part of us.”

~ **Justin Cronin**

TEATIME WITH JEANNIE AT CHARTWELL - August 2019



BEING a sociable, good person to the core, Jeannie's Chartwell retirement home was just right with its society of her own age group. Our century-old photo prints take us back to England where she first measured the world. The change, then to now, is huge, of course. On our visit that summer day when we took the photos (above), we were blessed to enjoy tea & a long chat about everything with her – including of her family – happy memories!

Our hearts were filled with sadness when we learnt the news of Jean's passing. Even with the preparation we had, when told that she would not make it out of hospital, we still hung on to "hope and prayers" that she would pull through.

Jean was a lovely and truly special lady, who touched all our hearts. We were blessed to have her with us for all these many years. She will always be remembered too, for her delicious British Trifle dessert. At the last Church Bake Sale, our daughter Selina purchased her delicious Trifle and both Michael & I went to collect this from her. As Selina thoughtfully shared this with us, I guess we may have been the last people to have enjoyed her delicious and memorable dessert. Yes, I am sure like many, she will always hold a special place in our hearts. We would like to extend our condolences to her daughter Ann, and to the rest of her family.

R.I.P. Jean.

~ **Michael & Lynette Rooker**

JEAN Merrifield carried the voices of a century and her words conveyed a penetrating wisdom that echoed in your mind long after she had said her piece. Each time Jean spoke, hope filled the space of our grand church sanctuary and that of our humble living rooms.

What a blessing to be over one hundred years young with a strong heart, sharp mind, wise wit, and that clear voice! Jean's Lancashire melody all at once commanded your attention and comforted your soul. We will carry mindfully the words of wisdom of Jean Merrifield within our being and throughout our lives.

~ **Selina, Fede, Talia and Damian**



I TOOK a few pics of Jean at the talent show of November 17th 2019.

What a wonderful person we had the privilege to know!

And what a great subject for a photo enthusiast!
Her face says SO much.

~ Eric Wilson



IT WAS THE skits that **Jean** put on for our Talent shows that really blew me away! How many of you would willingly help write and star in a skit referencing Viagra! That particular skit is my 'peak Jean Merrifield moment'!

That skit demonstrated that Jean was a 'modern woman'. But she had the wisdom to take positive things from the past with her as she went beyond the social values of her youth. After I read the 23 Psalm in the service about finding comfort in a world being gripped by a pandemic, she made a point of calling me to tell me how grateful she was that I had read it all the way through, as it had been a great source of comfort to her throughout her life.

Jean is unique and irreplaceable. But, if we all work to follow her example, even just a bit - we will be helping to keep LUUC a special place

~ Susan Czarnocki

JEAN was actively engaged in living. She was wise, she was funny, she was multi-talented, she could relate to any age group, and she cared about others. She was so proud of "her" triplets. A lot of people will miss her!

~ *Kathy Matyas*

I CONSIDER Jean as a warm friend, always happy to talk to me when I met her. Her regular presentations when we used to meet for the Sunday services, were stunningly interesting. We learned a lot about England and she proved also that she knew how to cope with the difficulties of life.

How can we not remember the delicious trifles she prepared for us each time we had lunch with the Congregation?

~ *Hélène C. Auer*

JEAN MERRIFIELD was one of only three people in this world who always got away with kissing me on the lips (the others being my mum and my sister Su). Jean had so many of the qualities I most admire – wisdom, generosity, fairness, intelligence, confidence, kindness, strength and an awesome wicked sense of humour.

I have so many stories of my years of being friends with Jean, but I'll share this one here because it never fails to make me laugh. It happened at the refreshment table during the 2011 Talent Show (you may remember this as the year of the "inappropriate skit fiasco"). It was intermission and I was serving desserts. Jean brought her usual trifle, but she also presented a pan of chocolate yumminess. When I asked her what she called her new, unusual offering, she replied, deadpan, "my dear, have you never had 'sex in a pan'?" Then came the twinkle in her eye and curl of her lip. When I recovered, I suggested she not say that too loud or it may get banned from future LUUC dessert tables! This was Jean's subtle way of saying, it's going to be okay, time to laugh about it. And we did then and shared many more laughs over the years.

She always made a point of checking in with me regularly, especially when she knew things weren't so right in my world. I marvelled that she took the time to express her concern, offer support and share her experiences. I was grateful for her friendship. She was a remarkable woman and utterly unforgettable.

During one of our last conversations, she expressed that her eyesight and hearing were almost gone and that she was ready to go anytime. Though I told her to hang in there -- there are still so many stories we need to hear -- I understood. It was hard to be the unstoppable Jean Merrifield, when she wasn't able to continue being just that.

I love you, Jean. Safe travels.

One last kiss on the lips from me...

~ *Catherine Forbes*





JEAN was an absolutely exceptional woman. Being the eldest member of the congregation, we saw her as the stable, grounded roots from which everything blossomed. We looked up to her as the kind of person we hoped to be -- wise, intelligent, passionate, empathetic and giving. We still remember her words of wisdom and encouragement at the end of the youth services. The immediate silence that descended on the room when she spoke said everything about how valued her opinion was to the congregation. Her wisdom will continue to guide the LUUC community for many generations. She managed to always speak the truth while also making us feel proud of what we had accomplished. We just hope she knew how much she contributed to shaping us into the people we are today.

We visited Jean a few times at her residence during Covid. When she came to the front door, we couldn't hug her, even though that was what we wanted to do more than anything. This was particularly sad because there is absolutely nothing better than one of Jean's warm hugs.



We will forever love you and miss you, Jean. You will always have a special place in our hearts.

~ Olivia & Isabella Gavanski

I ADMIRE Jean for her kindness and her engaging, straight-forward way of looking at things. She had a wonderful wit and timely things to say and read to us. I enjoyed visiting her to speak about things important to both of us. She was a true, honest friend to many, and she appreciated every one of us. I will miss her.

~ Sari Kelen



*Jean enjoying a backyard BBQ
~ photo by Catherine*

I FONDLY remember the Sunday mornings I used to give **Jean** a lift to the Sunday service at the church. We were still located at BUC at the time. We would chit-chat about everything and nothing. She was such an inspiring lady, a role model. And her delicious trifle, OMG We will miss her.

~ Margot Barclay

JEAN liked to be noticed ("Don't need a microphone") and was positive in human relations. She was practical minded in how she looked to help others. That was influenced within her family and she was involved in Unitarian youth activities also connected to The Nightingale Unitarian Centre in Derbyshire. We visited there and found it a very impressive place.

Conversations going to and from church in Lachine were often a special part of the service analysis. We also enjoyed a special unspoken "feeling" about situations that had no part in just a "TRIFLE". Once in a while we would stop for lunch and split a beer. We also have in our special bank of memory treasures the visit with Ann and Hershel to us at Glaramara in the Adirondacks.

For us, Jean will always be a loving memory.

~ Dori and Peter Abbott



*Ann, Jean, Hershel and Dori
~ photo by Peter Abbott*

JEAN was a role model for how to age with grace and beauty, fierce intelligence, humour and independence.

I often recall these words that she spoke in a discussion after an LUUC service. We were talking about the meaning of "religion": "To me, religion is how you live your life every day."

You lived well **Jean**. Rest in peace.

~ Rob Lutes

WE REMEMBER Jean for her positive attitude and her concern for others in her family, LUUC and Manoir Kirkland.

She had a great fashion sense and always had a new hairdo every Friday. She had a fine sense of humour and enjoyed getting out of the residence for a drive by the lake or to meet friends. She was very proud of the fact that she caught a fish a few years ago on an outing and often joined us for the LUUC picnics during the summer. She had a voice that drew your attention and gave us many good readings and words of wisdom during the Zoom services over the past year.

~ Gary and Ofie Spiller



*Two of the last photos of Jean pictured on right with Gary
~ photos from Gary*





**Jean with Mary Rowan on the occasion of Mary's 98th birthday, June 24th, 2020 - both seated – Gary Spiller playing ball on the left, Dori Abbott kneeling and Carol Rowan standing on the right.
~ photos from Carol Rowan**

I REMEMBER Jean for her sense of humour and the stories she told us about her experience during WWII and her cupboard from England and the support she received from her family. She always had a group around her and everyone was laughing.

Lois and Peg and I visited her a few years ago to watch a video of Jean in a play and I remember laughing very hard especially when Jean used different British accents. She was very talented as an actor as well as with her cooking.

~ Maud Bonnier



**Jean, Maud and Helie
~ photo by Kerry-Anne Kutz**

JEAN was a tremendous inspiration and source of strength to me. I loved her straight-forwardness, her honesty and her sense of humour. I appreciated her telling me what songs she wanted me to sing when she was speaking at a service and how she wanted me to sing them. She was always right! (I loved sitting between Jean and Maud at our congregation luncheons; I felt so privileged.)

I marveled at her beauty, the way she dressed, her physical strength and determination to attend our services in person or on-line and to participate. Her reflections on her unique personal history and the moving readings she shared with us will always remain with me.

Jean was the matriarch of our remarkable congregation of which I am proud and so grateful to be a member. I will never forget her, will always hear her voice and see her beautiful smile. I miss her tremendously but am uplifted by the incredible women, men and children of the Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation who also knew and loved Jean.

~Kerry-Anne Kutz



*Top: Ariel Amstutz, Peg Wooley, Rev. Carole Martignacco, Heather Falconer
Bottom: Irene Hausknot, Catherine Forbes, Maud Bonnier and Jean
~ photo by Kerry-Anne Kutz*

JEAN was indeed a fine example and caring friend to all of us.

~ Toni Smith



~ photo by John Schmidt

ALL OF LUUC mourns the death of Jean Merrifield – our Lassie from Lancashire - our Bonnie Jean – who never lost her English accent. She lived an amazing 104 years, through two world wars, and two deadly pandemics, through a lifetime in England to emigrating to Canada in her retirement - and still her stout old heart kept beating. She made life-long friendships, inspired people along the way; was admired and respected by folks of all ages for her wit, wisdom and common sense. Armed with her trusty walking stick, she was game for anything ... fishing, trifle making, visiting, taking the church service, being a part of life until the very end – Right!! We will miss you Jean and your sense of humour – so glad that we knew you!

~ Heather Falconer

The last words are from our youngest contributor:

JEAN provided a bright light that always shined over our congregation. Now it's our job to make sure that light never burns out.

~ Damian Quin Sanchez-Rooker



1943 - Jean in the war years



1948 Jean with Bernard and Ann.
~ photos from Ann