



Jane D. Ortel

October 13, 2022

Jane D. Ortel, age 90, of Wakefield, RI, passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by family, on Thursday, Oct. 13, 2022.

Winona Jane was born on May 20, 1932, in Narberth, PA, to Loraine Musselman and William James Drennen.

Jane attended Gettysburg College (class of 1954), where she majored in English and was active in the Student Christian Association, becoming its first woman president. Jane was always proud of her membership in the academic, merit-based Phi Beta Kappa Society, whose passion for lifelong learning very much aligned with her own. She remained close friends with her Delta Gamma sorority sisters. Most importantly, at Gettysburg, she met the love of her life, R. Wade Ortel, whom she married in 1955, after receiving her MA in education from Goucher College, with the aid of a Ford Foundation Fellowship. While her young husband completed medical school, Jane taught first grade.

In 1960, Jane and Wade embarked with baby Dee (born 1959, and then Jo, born 1961) on a two-year, once-in-a-lifetime experience above the Arctic Circle, in Kotzebue, Alaska. A true partnership buoyed by idealism and a commitment to service to others, Jane created a loving, welcoming home filled with music, books and new friends while Wade cared for Native Alaskans in

Kotzebue and in 20 remote villages across 70,000 square miles as part of the U.S. Public Health Service.

From 1962-67, the Ortels lived on Block Island, twelve miles off the coast of Rhode Island, where Wade served as the Island doctor. Son Jim was born in 1965. Jane and Wade cherished the Island friendships they made (many centered around their love of chamber music and art), and fell under the spell of the Island's natural beauty.

In 1967, the family moved to Williston, Vermont, where they lived for ten very happy years. In addition to activities as a fulltime mom and partner to Wade, Jane joyfully took up cross-country skiing, continued her voracious reading and book groups, and played chamber music with other amateur musicians. She treasured family camping vacations that included her intrepid father, canoeing and sailing (particularly at Ricker Pond State Park, Vermont), and the meaningful community the family found in the Williston Federated Church. After Jim entered school, Jane returned to part-time nursery-school teaching.

In 1977, the Ortels moved to Wheeling and subsequently Morgantown, West Virginia, where Jane continued her amateur music and volunteer work (Meals on Wheels, AFS), and Jane and Wade rekindled their early interest in Quakerism.

In 1990, the couple retired to Block Island, where they volunteered at the library, engaged in political activism with the Quakers, and enjoyed living near Jim and wife Marion's young family. They subsequently moved to Wakefield, RI, on the mainland, to take fuller advantage of concerts and other cultural events in New England. It was during this time that Jane increased her involvement in music, participating in numerous summer programs in Maine and Vermont.

Jane's cheerful, positive spirit touched many lives. Her genuine interest in others enabled her to make new friends easily, and nurture close, lifelong friendships – stretching all the way back to her elementary and junior high school years. Her love for fellow human beings was matched only by her sense of gratitude and wonder about the world around her.

But it was her husband and family to which Jane was most devoted. From the time they met, she and Wade shared a remarkable love story, rooted in profound mutual respect and admiration, common values, and intellectual curiosity. They spent many hours discussing political affairs, science, history, art, music, and the many ways our lives are intertwined personally and globally. Humor and wit were also constants in their lives; they truly enjoyed each other's company. Jane entered into her children and grandchildren's interests, too, enthusiastically supporting their choices, offering encouragement and celebrating their achievements.

Jane is survived by Wade, her husband of 67 years, daughters Dee Sparks and Jo Ortel, son Jim and daughter-in-law Marion S. Ortel; grandchildren Lucas Wade and Tory Adna Sparks, and Brooke Stephan and Wade Christian Ortel. She is preceded in death by her parents and brother Robert James Drennen.

Tribute Wall

CH

“ Carolyn Hunt lit a candle in memory of Jane D. Ortel



Carolyn Hunt - June 21, 2023 at 09:45 PM

CH

Janie was my roommate throughout college, best friend, Delta Gamma sister, and wedding bridesmaid who I have and will always love. I miss her and her and Wade's phone calls. We lived far apart after college days but kept closely in touch. Blessings to all of her family and "love you", Wade. "Huttsie" thinks of him daily.

Carolyn Hunt - June 21, 2023 at 10:09 PM

LH

“ *I have known Jane Ortel since the time of my earliest memories. She was my mother's dear friend for 60 years, and a ray of sunshine whenever our families gathered. Our visits to Block Island were other-worldly! We couldn't quite believe such a place was real! We were lucky to live close for a decade in Vermont, and it was a joy to have Jane and Wade come to my wedding. I've been privileged to visit them in recent years with my parents, and watch as their conversations ranged across many broad topics (personal, political, societal and the natural world!), all of them heartfelt, and always interspersed with Jane's humor and significant range of knowledge. The entire Schultz family joins me in sending heartfelt condolences to the Ortel family for their deep loss. With love, Laurie Schultz Heim*

Laurie Schultz Heim - December 05, 2022 at 05:31 PM

BT

“ *Thinking of you all and so grateful to have known Jane and her luminous cheer for just a little bit. Always, Beth Taylor*

Beth Taylor - December 04, 2022 at 05:44 PM