



Jean Holden Cole

March 26, 1920 - January 1, 2016

Jean Holden Cole – Leader in Community Arts, Health and Education

Jean Holden Cole, 95, an early founder and enthusiastic supporter of the Oak Ridge community and its arts programs, died early on New Year's Day at Canterfield of Oak Ridge after several years of declining health.

Jean Cole was a 70-year resident of Oak Ridge, arriving with her husband Thomas Earle Cole as a young bride when he joined the Clinton Laboratories Physics Division in 1946. Raising sons Hank, Ted and Peter, they shared time at their Disston Road and Watts Bar homes until Tom's death in 2002. She moved to Canterfield two years ago.

Jean's involvement in Oak Ridge and the surrounding community reached from women's and children's health, to art and pottery programs, to early desegregation and education support efforts, to program and curriculum development for continuing education and senior learning.

Jean, together with MaryAnn Gibbons, founded and led the early programs of what was to become Planned Parenthood of the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Their focus was to enable women and their families, particularly in the rural areas of the Cumberland Plateau, to receive medical examinations and public health services and to learn of ways they could choose to plan their families. From public health clinics in Anderson County, the organization branched out to provide services in Morgan, Roane, Union, and Campbell counties. Jean was also able to serve the broader regional community's health needs through her board memberships on the Anderson County Health Council and the Oak Ridge Methodist Hospital.

Jean, with her interest and training in art, helped found, together with others, the Community Art and Craft Center in its first Outer Drive home on Ogden Lane and helped to bring quality artists and training to the community. As the Art Center moved to its present location in in the early 1960s, Jean shifted focus from painting to pottery, responding to the fine training of Charles Counts, Jane Larson, Ernie Wilson, and others. She and Oddy Curtis then headed the Center's Pottery Studio and led training there for over 18 years, building interest for countless community and regional residents and initiating the careers of notable potters at the regional and national level. Jean was instrumental in helping bring visiting artists from around the United States and from

countries such as Nigeria and Korea to expand the learning, vision and appreciation of potters and other artists. With Oddy, Jean worked with children to help them “play with clay” at the Studio and at countless community activities. Teachers brought children by the bus load to the Art Center to experience with them clay and art.

Jean was also instrumental in establishing pottery and craft centers beyond Oak Ridge, particularly seeing the potential of these to build skills for employment and sustainable business for local craftsmen. The Appalachian Arts and Crafts Center near Clinton and Norris is an example of those successful efforts.

Jean was a longtime member of the Foothills Craft Guild. Her sometimes whimsical but most often practical-use pottery can be found in homes throughout the region and across the US and abroad. In addition, she collaborated with many artist’s projects including Charles Counts’ restoration of the “Hymn to Life” mural at the Oak Ridge Institute for Nuclear Studies Cancer Research Hospital and on Jane Larson’s large “Energy and Life” mural on the outside of the Art Center.

Mrs. Cole was a strong supporter of desegregation efforts, the success of the city’s first-in-Tennessee desegregated schools and the eventual evolution of the school system in Anderson County. She and Tom, together with many, provided assistance to disadvantaged students to upgrade youth education and skills and later to offer support during their college years.

Jean with Tom, was involved in the creation on the Oak Ridge Institute of Continued Learning (ORICLE) and its service for the continuing education within the community, particularly as an advocate for seniors’ development and engagement. She was a member of the curriculum committee and served on the second Board of Directors.

Jean and Tom were some of the early members of Saint Stephen’s Episcopal Church and later, members of the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church.

For many years, hot or cold, Jean and friends could be seen on the Jackson Square or Oak Ridge Country Club tennis courts and at poolside for their children’s participation in Atomic City Aquatic Club practices and meets.

Jean Cole was born in March, 1920 in Poughkeepsie New York, daughter of Aletta Platt and Benjamin Holden. After a childhood time in France, the family moved to Winter Park, Florida where she attended Winter Park High School and eventually met her husband-to-be, Tom Cole. She attended Connecticut College for Women in New London (now Connecticut College) and later Rollins College in Winter Park.

Jean and Tom Cole were married in March, 1944 and after Tom’s wartime Navy service, moved to Oak Ridge. They raised sons Hank, Ted and Peter through numerous personal, recreational, school and athletic pursuits, and they were later devoted grandparents to grandchildren Earle, Brandon and David. They also traveled extensively, both in the U.S. and abroad for business and pleasure.

Mrs. Cole is survived by two sons, Henry Earle “Hank” Cole and his wife Jennine

Anderson of Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, and Edmund Platt "Ted" Cole and his wife Nancy of Bradenton, Florida. There are three grandsons: Thomas Earle Cole, Brandon Bryant Cole and David Christopher Anderson and two great grandchildren, Felix Cole Anderson and Tallulah Bean Cole. Jean is also survived by her nephew Benjamin Bates, grandnephew Marshall Bates and grandniece Morgan Bates, all of Houston, Texas and by grandnephews John Perrine deNoyelles III and Richard Scott deNoyelles, grandniece Denise Martiel Tormey, 4 great grandnephews and 3 great grandnieces, all of the Orlando, Florida area.

Mrs. Cole was preceded in death by her husband, Thomas Earle Cole and by her third son, Peter Bartlett Cole, who died in an accident in 1981.

The memorial service will be held on Tuesday, January 19 at 3:00 PM at the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church (address below).

The family has asked that, in lieu of flowers, remembrances be made to any of the following charities:

Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church

(or Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church Memorial Garden)

809 Oak Ridge Turnpike

Oak Ridge, TN 37830

phone: 865-483-6761

Oak Ridge Art Center

201 Badger Rd

Oak Ridge, TN 37830

phone: 865-482-1441

Christen Foundation

c/o Amedysis Hospice

5529 Dutch Valley Rd, Suite C

Knoxville, TN 37918

Phone: 865- 689-7123

Comments



“ I am sorry to hear of the loss of my friend and neighbor. I took care of Mr. Cole and became friends with Mrs. Cole. I will always remember the happy times of her inviting my children and I to come thru the backyard for visits. She was a jewel and one of a kind. Please know that you all are in my thoughts and prayers. May God give you strength, comfort and peace in the days ahead.

-Denise Capshaw & Family

Denise Capshaw - January 19, 2016 at 04:27 PM



“ I was so sorry to read of Mrs. Cole's passing. My deepest sympathies to Mr. Cole and the family. I became acquainted with both of you as a volunteer at NHC bingo. Was also sorry to hear that Mrs. Cole had left that facility. May God comfort you in the coming days and weeks.

Diane and Steve Skeens - January 17, 2016 at 02:17 PM



“ We got to know Jean a few years ago when she started coming to Wednesday night pot luck dinners at the United Church. However, our first connection goes back 50 years. Our daughter Ann came home from nursery school and announced that she was in love with Pumpkin. We finally figured out that she meant Peter Cole as in "Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater" Dick and Mona

Richard Raridon - January 16, 2016 at 11:14 AM



“ It is sad to lose Jean Cole. As a next door neighbor for many years on Disston RD, my family had many interactions with Jean and her family. I remember well the two dachshunds, Pepper and Fritz who gave Jean and family much joy. Jean was always involved in the community, and she helped make Oak Ridge the unique and wonderful city it has been since the Manhattan days.
Lanny Frazier

Lanny Frazier - January 07, 2016 at 12:02 PM



“ A very special lady and a great neighbor. Jean and her family will always be remembered for their excellent contributions to the Oak Ridge Community.

Carolyn and JR Barkman

JR Barkman - January 15, 2016 at 09:40 PM