



Jeanne Cooley Greeley Thayer

September 26, 1917 - July 6, 2021

Jeanne Cooley Greeley Thayer passed away on July 6, 2021, at the age of 103. Jeanne began a long life on September 26, 1917. As a child of an army officer, Jeanne spent years living abroad in Hawaii, the Philippines, and Paris, sowing within her an appreciation of culture that would echo through her accomplishments later in life.

At the young age of 17, Jeanne moved alone to New York City with aspirations towards becoming an actress. Her strong desire to act drove her to pursue work in the intimidating world of show business, where she began as a model and moved on to secure a role in the play entitled *The Women*. Whether an active participant or attentive spectator, Jeanne developed a love for theater and the performing arts.

During World War II, Jeanne served as an analyst for the Informational Intelligence Unit of the Air Transport Command before mourning the death of her first husband, Horace Greeley, killed as a prisoner of war in Bataan.

After the war, Jeanne remarried and began a family with Walter N. Thayer. During this time, she started a new chapter of her life, endorsing the arts and education in countless forms. She was a member of the Westchester Council of the Arts, the Council at the College of Purchase, and, later, a member of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York. Two fellowships are given in her honor, in fine and performing arts, both of which are still awarded to graduating students at SUNY.

Beyond her service to academia, Jeanne remained committed to other organizations of the arts, participating on the boards of the New York City Ballet, Sleepy Hollow Restorations (now Historic Hudson Valley), and was a Life Trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, with which she served on many committees, including the International Council. Jeanne was also the first woman to give the commencement address at Attica Correctional Facility as a trustee with SUNY.

Having spent most of her life in New York, Jeanne moved to Santa Barbara, California in 1994, where she lived until her death. Despite the distance, Jeanne traveled often to New York City and remained passionately bound to the furthering of the arts and the appreciation of culture in all its forms. In Santa Barbara, Jeanne became a patron of international music students at the Music Academy of the West, and spent countless hours enjoying their craft and encouraging their work.

From New York to California, between galleries and gardens, Jeanne sought beauty and found it often. She continued to share that beauty with those around her. She was a treasure and inspiration to friends and family alike. She was caring and dedicated as a wife and mother. She imparted her love for the arts, travel, and the importance of education to all her children and grandchildren.

In the words of her granddaughter, Kate O'Shaughnessy, "She held every person she ever met with unconditional positive regard. She had the grace of a ballerina and the mind of a scholar."

Jeanne is survived by her children Tom Thayer, Gail Reagan, Susan Noble, and Ann Thayer, 10 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren.