



Jean Barker Matthaei

November 13, 1919 - June 10, 2014

Jean Barker Matthaei (born Jean Montgomery Barker) was born on Nov. 13, 1919, daughter of Florence (Montgomery) and Loring James Barker of Berkeley, CA. She died peacefully on June 10, 2014.

She was raised in Berkeley, CA along with her older brother, Loring M. (called Jim) Barker, and attended UC Berkeley. She graduated in Political Science in 1940. While at UC Berkeley, she was very active in the campus student YWCA, and became president of that organization. After graduating from Berkeley, she attended the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago for one year. With WWII in effect, she then worked for the Office of Emergency Management in Washington DC doing social work to aid new civilian government employees. After one year, she switched to the civilian personnel department of the US Navy Bureau of Ships, where she did job classification. (She said she switched because the Bureau of Ships had air conditioning while Emergency Management did not.) After leaving the Bureau of Ships in 1946, she was on the staff of the UC Berkeley campus YWCA until 1951. She was then employed by a San Francisco Bay Area utility in the personnel department until 1953. At that time, she married, retired, and became a dedicated volunteer for various causes involving nature education and children.

In 1952, George Matthaei became acquainted with Jean on a two-week Sierra

Club "high trip" in Kings Canyon National Park. This was a very special experience for both of them, and resulted in their marriage in June, 1953, 61 years ago. They had two daughters, Jane and Susan. When Jean, George, and their girls moved to Santa Barbara in 1964 for George to teach electrical engineering at UCSB, Jean wanted her daughters to have the experience of being Girl Scouts, but all of the troops were filled. However, the Girl Scout office said that her daughters could be in troops if Jean would be a leader. She agreed, and became a very dedicated leader. In addition to the regular Scouting activities, Jean generated several new merit badges about seashore creatures and whales, and became a resource person for leading informative beach walks. Jean became a Docent at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History in 1989. George, inspired by Jean, became a Docent a year later. Both were Docents at the Museum for over 20 years.

Family hiking trips were a favorite form of recreation. A line from a letter Jean wrote to a friend a few years ago tells much about her. It said, in part, "flowers, trees, birds, butterflies, creatures, large and small - some of which I have known and loved for the better part of 8 decades." She shared her love of nature with many people, especially her husband, children, and grandchildren.

Jean and George were long-time members of St. Mark United Methodist Church in Santa Barbara.

Jean will be deeply missed by her family and very many friends.

Jean is survived by her husband, George Matthaei; daughters, Jane M. Bell (Douglas) in Torrance, CA and Susan M. Larsen (James) in Atascadero, CA.; grandchildren, Rebecca Wendlant (Jansen), Matthew Larsen (Jennifer), Laura Bell, and Lisa Bell; great-grandson, Taevyn Wendlandt; and loving nieces and nephews.

There will be a memorial service for Jean on Sunday, June 29, 2014 at 2:00 pm in the Samarkand Mountain Room, 2550 Treasure Dr., Santa Barbara, CA 93105.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be sent to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, 2559 Puesta del Sol Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93105.