

Norraine Cendron, 1927-2017



In March, AAWE lost two exceptional and long-standing Senior members: Norraine Cendron and Olive Lorisgnol. These devoted friends could well serve as examples of the finest sort of dedication to our Franco-American community. Norraine worked for 25 years as head of a club for spastic children under the *Paralysés de France* organization, for which she received a medal from the French government. Before that, she served two three-year terms as head of Social Service work at the American Cathedral.

Olive's multiple activities were mainly with AAWE and WICE. So many aspects of AAWE that we take for granted today were dreamed up and

carried to fulfillment by Olive. The club would not be what it is now without her imagination, enthusiasm, tenacity, and ability to inspire others.

Read more about Norraine in Helen Shavit's lively interview, which is part of AAWE's 2003 Oral History Project. (Contact the office for a copy.) You may refer to Jane Mobille's interview of Olive in the Jan/Feb 2015 *AAWE News*.

How fortunate we are to have known these two gifted women, and how we shall miss them: their keen minds, their enthusiasm, their warmth, and their love of people will never be forgotten.

Sally Benoist



Olive Lorsignol, 1930-2017

AAWE lost one of its most well-respected and well-loved members on March 28. On these pages, you will find a sampling of the spontaneous reactions of over 50 members, who shared their thoughts on Olive via Facebook and in an email thread. One thing is for sure, Olive was a friend and inspiration to many of us. May she rest in peace. May her memory be eternal.

Olive at AAWE

- 1963 Olive Gibson, graduate of Smith College, wife of Éric Lorsignol, and mother to Christine, Marc, and Daniel, joins AAWE
- 1965 Active on the Board
- 1967 In charge of Bilingualism
 - Hosts neighborhood coffees
- 1970 Gives English reading and history classes for children
- 1971 Produces a Survey of Bilingualism in Franco-American Children of AAWE
- 1976 Elected President
 - Spearheads the AAWE/AARO conference on American citizenship
 - "Invents" the AAWE Christmas Bazaar
 - Visits 17 East Coast colleges to advocate for the dual-national student, including Sweet Briar, which soon after announces its scholarship for a dual-national student
 - Establishes College Night, later becomes Paris College Day
- 1980 FAWCO Rep
- 1997 Wins American Citizens Abroad "Eugene Abrams Award" for her volunteer work at AAWE and WICE (Women's Institute for Continuing Education), where she was a Board Member and headed the Arts programs
- 2003 Interviews AAWE founding members for Oral History Project
- 2009 Spearheads the first AAWE Auction
- 2010 Becomes Honorary Member of AAWE
- 2011 Chair of Seniors Committee
 - Olive and Betty Abugheida attempt to establish a retirement home for English speakers
 - Encourages members to have Living Wills
 - Coins the concept "Bilingualism in Aging"
 - Suggests the creation of a Film Club
 Assists the 50th Anniversary Committee
- 2015 Co-chairs the fifth AAWE Auction with Julia Fainsilber

Names of those saluting Olive: Perrine, Michael, Julia, Judith,

Mary Lynne, Sarah, Pat, Mary, Kristina, Helen, Emma, Barbara, Jude, Wendy, Kathleen, Joy

Just as most of you are in Paris grieving the death of Olive, I have been over here in Seattle doing the same thing. • Olive represented so many values to so many different women in our multi-generational group. • “AAWE-some” Olive!! •



Olive invented the Bazaar in order to get AAWE out of debt incurred while fighting for nationality and voting rights in Congress. • My parents had met Olive on the France during their transatlantic crossing and couldn't wait to tell me about her and the association that I could join which would help me feel less lonely in a foreign country. • Olive will remain a lovely and brave lady. • Olive had offered to host an event on April 20th, a talk by Sarah Valinsky, who specializes in African-American studies! And the talk was her idea!! • What courage and generosity. • How can we begin to express all that Olive has meant to AAWE and many of us personally? It kind of takes your breath away. • "It can't be!" • Such a *force de la nature*, always moving forward, with ideas, energy, persistence, and care. In that sense, she never changed – the same when I met her and 40 years later. Since she stayed young it was easy to think she would always be there. • She left this world her way – with great dignity and as always, with concern for others. • Olive represented everything good about AAWE. While she appreciated the more “social aspects”, she never lost sight of “the cause” behind it all...and she did so over the decades in various roles within the organization. When she got

Karen, Jacqueline, Emmy, Robynne, Denise, Beatrice, Bernice,

Ann, Sally, Beth, Deborah, Marissa, Irene, Ellen, Josh, Ashlie,

involved in something, you just knew the bar would be raised, intellectually and energy-wise. • I, too, was inspired by Olive. I, too, used to say "I want to grow up and be like Olive." • I admired her both at WICE and AAWE. She had spunk and "la joie de vivre". • If Olive saw a need she looked for a way to meet that need and then she did it. It was that direct and simple. She was generous and she was kind. She was also great fun to be with and to work with. We can count our blessings that Olive was one of us and cared so much for us. • She truly embodied the ideals of a Franco-American wife, mother, and citizen. • Meeting Olive was the reason I joined AAWE so many years ago, and she remained a wonderful and important friend and role model for me ever since. I know I speak for many in AAWE in saying this. • She was a woman of the world (and "both worlds"!), a woman of heart and conviction. • AAWE has lost one of its remarkable members, a President, and extraordinary organizer of events relating to education, cultural activities, overseas voter rights, WICE, and of course the Seniors' Committee. • I'm trying to remember when the last time I saw her was. Was it last year's AARO tax meetings or was it as recently as the Women's March in January? • Oh no! Olive was the woman I think we all aspire to be. • Indeed Olive was a friend and inspiration to SO many people. • Neither AAWE nor the world will be the same without her. • She will be sorely, terribly missed. • Olive was truly a pillar of our Franco-American community, always cheerful even when things were tough for her, always ready to help concretely or with ideas, a source of sage and measured advice, loyal to whatever person or endeavor in which she chose to invest. It's comforting that she died in her sleep. • I believe the last time I spoke to her she was telling me how much she loved her apartment and her neighborhood. She said, "Aren't I the luckiest girl in the world?" • Olive was one of the women that made me so proud to be part of AAWE! • I joined in 1966 and know how much Olive did and has done to bring our association to where it is today while always holding fast to the reason AAWE began in 1961. Keep the torch brightly lit and held high, dear members. Olive, Phyllis, Gertrude and all our departed members will be looking for that torch. • When I interviewed Olive for the *News* in 2014, I fell under the spell of her warmth, generosity, and vision. And also, her humility, that she didn't take herself too seriously. • We spent many times together looking at medieval churches in Paris. • When I think of Olive sitting next to me at the Cafe de Commerce Senior Lunch recently, she was her cheerful self. • I had the pleasure of walking with Olive for 5 kilometers a couple of years ago. I couldn't believe how fit she was. • When I last saw Olive, at the Bazaar, she was full of enthusiasm for us to start a members' lecture series! • Olive was a kind, classy and beautiful lady. •

Delaney, Sallie, Kerry, Nan, Andrea, Jill, Rosemary, Carol, Hillary, Mary-Ellen, Michelle,

Frances, Clara, Peggy, Janine, Jane, Luisa, Danielle, Virginia, Sandy,