



Joan Coyle Hancock

MAR 26, 1935 - JAN 15, 2024



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Joan Coyle Hancock died on January 15 at her home in Greenwich, NJ at the age of 88. She was born on March 25, 1935 at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, the older daughter of Jean and William “Chick” Mahoney. She was baptized Joan Nora Mahoney in St. Johns Church on May 26, 1935. Joan had an older brother John, nicknamed Jack, and a younger sister Suzanne. Both are deceased. At the beginning of their marriage, Joan’s father worked as a driver for United Parcel Services and her mother studied nursing on Riker’s Island. Because of family financial difficulties during the Great Depression, Jean dropped her studies and worked mainly as a waitress in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Joans’s mother eventually owned and managed a luncheonette in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn. And Joan’s father moved to a desk job with UPS. As a supervisor, he invented one of the original UPS parcel tracking systems.

After their marriage, Joan’s parents lived in Godwin Terrace in the Bronx before moving to Union St. in Brooklyn. Joan and her brother Jack started school during this time at St. Agnes. When Joan was 6 years old and in 2nd grade, the family moved to a house owned by her maternal grandfather, Harrison Burnett, in W. 152nd St. in upper Manhattan. It was there that she and her brother attended St. Catherines School. Joan was 9 when her sister Suzanne was born. At about the time of Suzannes birth, the family moved to her grandfathers tenement building at 354 W. 52nd St, where they lived until Joan was 23. Joan’s parents managed the building whose tenants included her paternal grandmother and other members of her extended family who had moved with them from their home in upper Manhattan.

Centrally located in the theatre district of Manhattan, life at 354 W. 52nd St. sometimes mirrored this exciting neighborhood (W. 52nd St was also called “swing street”). Joan described their space as a typical tenement apartment, limited in space and amenities, with the bathtub in the kitchen. But, in spite of this, the family was frequently visited by relatives and friends. It was both a lively home and a social center. The apartment door was always open, and the Mahoney’s home was



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often a party scene, a sentiment that Joan held wherever she lived. It was during her time growing up on 52nd St. in the neighborhood nick-named Hell's Kitchen, that Joan became a skillful social dancer. As a member of the Boy's Athletic League, an inclusive community organization for low-income families, she was introduced to camping and art, in addition to dancing. Indeed, she bragged about her dancing skills her whole life. This was most annoying to her husband Joe, whose idea of dancing was "jumping up and down!" When she lived in Berkeley, Ashkenaz Music and Dance Center, which sponsored a wide variety of international music and dance, was one of her favorite hangouts. She had started piano lessons in upper Manhattan when she was 6 and later was occasionally called upon to perform for guests by her father at 52nd Street. She recalled that her father occasionally unwittingly embarrassed her during these performances so she refused to play in public. Grandfather Harrison Burnett's second wife, Lilian Carter or Aunt Lily, was a professional piano player who worked in his speakeasies and bars. Aunt Lily was also a close friend of Larry Hart, of "Rogers and Hart" fame. She encouraged Joan and gave her sheet music signed by the composer. Joan took great pleasure playing the piano as an adult, practicing some of Hart's compositions on her favorite piano well into her 80s. Although arthritis limited her playing, she persisted. She gave this piano to her grandson, Lochlann, having previously given her beloved baby grand to his older brother, Cullen, encouraging them to continue the family love of piano music.

Joan finished grammar school at Sacred Heart School in Manhattan and graduated from Cathedral High School in 1953 in a class of 836 young women. It was during her high school years that she developed a major allergy, a form of hives. Her extremities were covered with welts, at times her feet, hands and face were so swollen that she could barely walk or see, let alone attend school. She spent weeks and months at skin clinics without success. Her schooling suffered. Still, during this physical trauma, she was elected president of her class in 1951 and president of the Latin Club in 1953. Somehow Joan managed to remain in the college prep curriculum in high school in spite of the hives. And, fortunately, her father insisted that she take the entrance examination for Hunter College. This is surprising because Joan said he also referred to Hunter as "that commie college!" Because of her mediocre academic history in high school, she was surprised when she was accepted at Hunter. Joan attended college for two years (1953-55). It became more difficult, however, because she was also expected to contribute to Jack's expenses at Notre Dame. Her working to help the family pay for Jack's education started in her junior year in high school when she took a part-time job at Shrafft's candy store, working after school and on weekends. At the same time her mother was working afternoons and evenings as a waitress. Joan took care of little sister Suzanne after school and was also expected to cook dinner for her sister



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and father and help Suzanne with her homework. Joan essentially became Suzanne's surrogate mother, creating a special bond between the sisters that lasted throughout their lives!

However, it was impossible for Joan to juggle all these responsibilities and flourish in college: her grades suffered and she was still dealing with hives. Although she eventually was forced to drop out, the Hunter experience was important to her. She found that higher learning was rewarding and that she made good friends while doing so. Several of them joined her on a trip to Cuba shortly after the Batista dictatorship had fallen to Fidel Castro. In spite of the surrounding turmoil, Joan managed, unsurprisingly, to have a great time! After Joan took a leave from Hunter, she briefly worked as a business representative for the New York Telephone Co., but was uninspired. She then applied for and accepted a job with the Olivetti Business Machines Corp., an Italian manufacturer of typewriters and adding machines. She started as a receptionist in her early twenties and was promoted to Sales Representative and Manager in three years at the flagship store showroom on Fifth Avenue. Even though she had never learned to type, Joan was awarded the Salesperson of the Year several times at this store, mainly selling typewriters! This job had a profound influence on her. She wrote "I became an expert on the interior art of the showroom. This company is world-famous for its design of machines, brochures and the interiors of their offices. They used original art such as sand sculptured walls, fine marble from Italy for display pedestals and the floors, and designer furniture." Indeed, this job had a profound impact on her in many ways.

Joan was especially proud of her sales skills. When she moved to Boston when her husband Gene was pursuing his Masters Degree at Boston College, she took a job as a sales representative with a carpet company, making estimates and selling repair recommendations of valuable older oriental rugs. She was on salary and made commissions on the repair sales. The owner later regretted this arrangement because of the hefty commissions she was earning. While this was a stop-gap job, she forever took an interest in hand made rugs and collected, when she could afford it, both oriental and Navajo rugs.

Joan was married in 1960 to Eugene Coyle. Her husband was an economist who worked for Brown Brothers Harriman, a large commercial bank in NYC during this period. He subsequently took a leave of absence to study for his doctorate in this field in Boston, MA. Over time this union led to three children, Siobhan, Eugene "Mack", and Daniel. Gene did not return to his BBH position, subsequently taking a teaching position at the University of Miami. In 1970 the family moved to California and eventually resided at 2731 Alcatraz Ave. The house at 2731 Alcatraz Ave.



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was the long term home to her children and the center of her life from 1970 until 1999. It was a basic wood shingle sided, two story house painted white, with a front second floor balcony and two enclosed porches, one upstairs and one downstairs, and an open upstairs side porch overlooking the driveway. It had three bedrooms, a big kitchen and featured an attractive natural wood, wainscoted Craftsman interior in the dining and living rooms. Joans's home showcased her newest finds and interests. It was warm because Joan made it so, serving as a sort of second home for her relatives, her friends and her children's friends. It hosted numerous parties, large and small. This house never saw a dull moment!

Joan's large family was number one. Well, maybe greater than number one! Her children were the center of her universe. Wherever they were, they were on her mind. She was always in their corner. Initially she didn't think she could have children. This was a heavy blow. Many medical consultations. But then there was a miscarriage and hope. A miracle. In rapid succession, Siobhan, Mack and Dan were born! Siobhan Coyle (Gallaher) and Eugene Francis Coyle were born in Lying-In Hospital in Boston, MA in 1966 and 1968, respectively. This was when her first husband was doing graduate work at Boston College and teaching at Emmanuel College, also in Boston. Daniel Harrison Coyle was born in May, 1970 in Miami in Jackson Memorial Hospital when Gene was teaching at the University of Miami and the family was living in Coral Gables. She also took in a foster son as an infant soon after Siobhan was born when they lived in Boston. He was named Owen. Joan was very disappointed that they were not allowed to adopt him. This large soft spot for children must at least partially account for her activism in public school education and participation in the Berkeley Public Schools, including with her children. She nearly finished her college degree at the University of San Francisco in 1980, with a BS in psychology. Joan did not realize she was only a few credits short, continuing to take upper division classes in the social sciences without counseling from USF. Nevertheless, throughout her adult life, she took academic and art classes in the Peralta Community College system in the SF Bay Area and, later, at Cumberland County Community College in Vineland, NJ, mainly because she enjoyed the stimulation of classroom interactions. However, in the end, she probably had enough credits for two degrees!

Joan had a strong interest in early education and alternative teaching methods, volunteering daily in her children's classes in the Berkeley public schools during their early school years. At the same time, she was a founding member of the Sesame Street Parent Cooperative Preschool (1970 -75) on College Ave in north Oakland near the Berkeley city limits, a small parent participant institution that has continued to function for over a half century. At the John Muir elementary



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school in Berkeley, Joan participated in the 'Head Start' Project and, later, the 'Follow Through' Project, working with a diverse racial and ethnic student population during the early stages of the Berkeley elementary school busing program. She served as the Parent Coordinator in the 'Follow Through' Project for the entire Berkeley Unified School District. She continued to participate as a volunteer in a class in late elementary grades in the 'Wari School', "an alternative education project" at the Malcom X middle school in Berkeley when Siobhan and Mack were students. Joan was especially proud of the work she did in these early education programs during this period of her life. The Wari experience was very rewarding, but time consuming. It was also where she met her future husband Joe, whose daughter Mara was a student in the program.

After her children had mostly advanced through the elementary school grades, Joan took a full-time job with the East Bay Skills Center on San Pablo Ave. in North Oakland, which she held from 1977 to 1982. She was Chief Examiner for the high school equivalency or G.E.D. program, administering tests well into the mid 1980s. It was during this period that she served as President of Union 142 of the California School Employees Association in the Peralta Community College System, which administered the Skills Center.

Joan loved fine art and spent various periods of her life taking art classes and buying and selling art. She had a business arrangement with her good friend Joan Leon, which they started and collaborated on not long after her family moved to Berkeley from Florida. This business (Leon/Coyle Associates) involved representing local artists, in particular, arranging sales to local businesses eager to decorate their offices with original artworks. The Olivetti experience must have played a role in Joan's decision to open this business. Later, she co-founded and was manager of a small art gallery named the Labyrinth on Shattuck Ave. near downtown Berkeley. The gallery displayed the works of local artists and only ended when the store owner and co-founder moved to Hawaii.

Wherever she lived, Joan took art classes, especially those in drawing and clay sculpture. She experimented with many art forms in small one-off classes, but she was partial to drawing with charcoal and pencil. Taking a drawing course at the Merritt College campus in Oakland in the early 1990s with her close older friend, bickering would often break out between them, providing entertainment for the class of mostly college age students. After moving to NJ, she continued with these interests, participating as a student at Clay College (originally part of Cumberland Co. Community College) in downtown Millville, NJ. During this time she won a local competition for senior artists in Cumberland Co. with a clay sculpture she named 'Venus Matured.' This art piece won second place in the subsequent NJ state-wide competition in the mid 2000s.



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One of Joan's greatest personal satisfactions was working for the World Institute on Disabilities (WID) during the mid 1980s, when she served as Ed Roberts administrative assistant. This organization was co-founded by Ed, Judy Heumann and Joan Leon and was originally located in Berkeley. This city was commonly considered the national leader in the disability movement, having produced The Center for Independent Living (CIL; it attracted a sizable number of people with severe physical disabilities as well as their able bodied activist supporters in the disability rights movement. It was during this time that Joan was known as JC, to distinguish her from the other Joan (Joan Leon). WID served as an important institution for disabled activists like Judy Heumann, Hale Zukas and others who JC greatly admired. Ed was a quadriplegic, surviving polio in the early 1950s, and left paralyzed from the neck down. Although he was not a founder, Ed served as an early and effective executive director of CIL. Because of his stature in the disability movement, Ed subsequently served as the Director of the California Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Gov. Jerry Brown's first administration in the mid1970s and early 1980s. His reputation and experience was essential to the financial stability of WID and its global influence. JC was thrilled to accompany Ed to Chicago when he received the McArthur Fellows "Genius" Award in 1984. However, in a close call with an airlines screw-up on the return trip, JC protected him from physical harm by ignorant airline employees during a disembarking fiasco at the Oakland Airport. But afterward, because of the airlines acknowledged negligence, she helped Ed negotiate a free trip around the world for himself and his attendants!

In 1985 Joan was roped into volunteering by her future husband Joe Hancock at the Echo camp for a July 4th weekend retreat, serving as a public relations party for both long time volunteers of CAMPS, INC and supporters. Joan and Joe bought most of the food and refreshments for these visitors for what turned into a 4 day event that year, which meant 3 meals a day and a "happy hour" for over 100 guests. Joe was in charge of "happy hour." But Joan was the volunteer head cook and the reason the event was a rousing success! These retreats became an annual tradition. Situated at the edge of the Desolation Wilderness in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Echo Camp was an important key to gaining support for the summer programs within the Berkeley community.

Joan and Joe were married at the Alameda Co. Courthouse on November 25,1987. The ceremony was brief, but the marriage was deep. Joan had been married only a few days when the bingo games began. Joe volunteered with her. After each game was over and they had cleaned up, on their way home and thoroughly exhausted, they usually stopped at the Albatross on San Pablo Ave for unwinding and a pitcher of good beer! This was the beginning of an amazing partnership



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between a city girl and a country boy. But the real secret of this union was their complete love and devotion to each other. The bingo games were a fund raising venture for CAMPS, INC. CAMPS was the non-profit organization that ran the two Berkeley summer camps for the City: they often had financial problems. However, they had gotten into even more trouble with the City and State for their alleged mis-management of unemployment insurance for some of the short term staff during their summer employment at Cazadero music camp near the Russian River. At this point, because of their lack of funds, CAMPS could not afford an executive administrator and was being run by the Board of Directors - not an ideal situation. Because of Joan's employment history and her connection with the organization as a volunteer at both Cazadero and Echo, she was hired as the only paid employee. The bingo job required working with three other nonprofits to manage high end bingo games for about 250 players twice a week with an all volunteer work force. This meant she needed several able bingo callers (that included her teenage son Mack) who could tolerate the taunts of seasoned veteran bingo players, plus additional volunteers to help sell bingo game sheets before the game and the "paper slot machines" called pull tabs during the game. If you had an association with the summer camps, she asked you to volunteer. If you were related to her you were asked to volunteer. She was very "popular" during this period - with old friends hiding behind cars and trees and in doorways when they saw her coming down the street. But Joan was tenacious and thrived on the pressure. At the end of the first year of these games, CAMPS, INC had grossed about 1.2 million dollars and paid off all of their debts.

One of Joan's unusual talents was her ability to adapt quickly to new situations. The move to South Jersey from Berkeley in her mid 60s could have posed serious issues. For example, she told Joe on their way East in early 1999 to live in the old Hancock family residence in Bacon's Neck that she didn't want him to farm, which he agreed to. So when they sold produce grown by Joe and packed by Joan at the Collingswood Farmer's Market in 2000, they were simply "market gardeners" even though they called their garden "Cat-Tail Farm." Joan and Joe were vendors at the Collingswood Farmer's Market again in 2001. This was a tough commute so they co- founded a small farmer's market in Bridgeton in 2002 and another in Salem City in 2003. The scope of these endeavors expanded over time, with Joan's interest in food preservation, which started in Berkeley, picking up steam. She loved canning and pickling produce from their garden. She sold these products at a roadside stand with the help of her grandson Tynan. She also got together with nutritionists from the newly founded Rutgers Food Innovation Center in Bridgeton for brainstorming sessions on new added-value products.



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Joan renewed her urban roots in the old city of Bridgeton with efforts to preserve 19th century commercial buildings, making the city more attractive for businesses and new inner city residents. To this end, she bought a three story old commercial building at 27 E. Commerce St. in the historic zone, that was vacant, but had recently housed the Bay-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra headquarters and a bookstore. During this time she undertook some light renovation of the building with the help of her sister, sister-in-law and husband. The second floor dining room ceiling painting on molded plaster by a civil war artist was preserved with the help of a NY artist and the electrical and plumbing systems upgraded. She also participated in the Bridgeton Main Street Association in the early 2000s, serving on the board of directors, whose mission was to help revive the city's downtown. This work was interrupted when she and Joe moved to help her self-employed Kentucky family with a new baby!

Joan's leisurely activities were also varied. She was a voracious reader with a broad taste in books – lately reading essays and short stories and everything about evolutionary biology, even though her vision was severely impaired from macular degeneration. One of her other long time hobbies was shopping at Thrift Stores. She had an unusually sharp eye for recycled treasures and took pleasure in showing them off. Roadside garage sales were also part of this fixation. She would often return from a trip to the grocery store with a car stuffed with old furniture, kitchen appliances, and other kinds of “wonderful things.” She also collected the old bones of animals she found on the farm or the desert roadside during car trips across the country. Skulls were her favorite ‘treasures’, which she proudly displayed as art work, but only after they were bleached. She especially loved exotic plants. Some of the living plant fossils (i.e. horsetail) that she pinched are still growing on the farm.

Joan was on the Dive Team at Hunter College and, when a pool was available, she regularly swam laps for exercise; she became a manicurist; she backpacked with her children; researched and put together her family tree (old school, before modern ancestry companies existed); learned to sail; learned to hang-glide; raised more children than her own and loved to disco. She was a generous philanthropist: in honor of her parents, Chick and Jean Mahoney, she donated a beautiful garden to Cumberland Co. Community College (now Rowan College of South Jersey, Cumberland Campus).

Joan leaves behind her beloved husband, Joseph G Hancock, Jr., brother-in-law, Steven Hancock of Napoleon, ND and sister-in-law, Karen Wesson, of Fresno, CA. Three children, Siobhan Gallaher (Sean) of Prospect, KY; Eugene “Mack” Coyle, IV (Jacqueline) of Wilmington, NC; Daniel



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Coyle (Kathleen) of Hilo, HI. Two stepchildren, Leita Hancock (John Wagner) of Santa Fe, NM; Mara Hancock (Tracy Davis) of Berkeley, CA.; ten grandchildren and one great grandchild; a niece, a nephew, great nieces, and nephews and one great, great nephew.

Because of Joan's love of art, and specifically of clay sculpture, it is suggested that donations be made in her honor to Clay College (Cumberland Co. Campus Educational Foundation, Rowen College of South Jersey) and/ or her devotion to serving the disabled community (The Center for Independent Living, 3075 Adeline St., # 100, Berkeley, CA 94703).



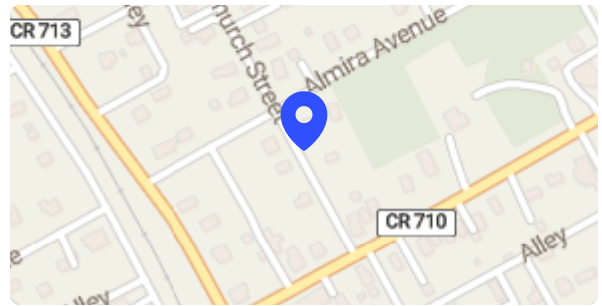
Events

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Cemetery Details

 **Camden County Crematory**
Waterford Township NJ





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Tim And Carolina Riley posted:

Sorry for your loss, our condolences..

March 10 at 3:53 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Joan by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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