



Jean M. Kroetsch

April 5, 1927 - January 1, 2023

Jean Sander was born in the Black Rock Riverside section of Buffalo on April 5, 1927, when Calvin Coolidge was President and Al Smith was Governor of New York. She was raised in a loving family and was a proud graduate of Mount St. Joseph's Academy in Buffalo, attending alumnae events until weeks before her passing. She was the bookkeeper in her family's plumbing business while taking night classes at Canisius College. She was fond, fast and lifelong friends with the "gang" from the "old" neighborhood, as well as a founding member of "The Skippers" whose girlhood adventures were world renowned back in the day.

Jean loved to ride horses, going to the stables early in the day to get the freshest & best in the barn. She met her future husband, Walter Kroetsch, when Walt returned to the neighborhood after service in the US Army at Los Alamos, NM. He brought one Army horse with him and had had acquired another horse. He needed someone to ride the other horse and a neighbor pointed him to Jean. Thus began a long love affair with both Walt and horses. Jean & Walt were "hitched" in a Thanksgiving wedding ceremony in 1949 and soon thereafter established roots in North Tonawanda where they first built a barn for their horses and later constructed a house on Witmer Rd, raising six children-three girls and three boys there.

It was a door to door petition drive to construct sidewalks on Witmer Rd for the safety of the children walking to school that launched Jean's political career. With the support of Walt and good friends, John & Olga Holleran, Marie &

Steve Nezezon, and Steffie & John Brzozowski, Jean's campaign for North Tonawanda City Treasurer was successful in 1974. She was the first woman elected to that office and served with distinction in that post until 1983.

Jean and Walt were faithful members of the North Tonawanda Democratic Committee. She had the privilege of meeting and greeting John F. Kennedy when he made a campaign stop in North Tonawanda in 1960, serving as a pledged delegate of Hubert Humphrey to the Democratic National Convention in 1968 and as a delegate to several NYS Democratic Conventions over the years. Jean was named Vice Chair Emeritus of the NT Democratic Committee and Democrat of the Year in 2017.

Jean was an active participant in civic affairs. She was a committed member of the Zonta Club of the Tonawandas attending their international conventions for several years. She also served as campaign Chair of the United Way of the Tonawandas in 1977-78 and as President of the organization from 1979-81. In addition, Jean was instrumental in establishing and fundraising for the Niagara Hospice facility in Lockport, NY.

Walt's work at Bell Aircraft's Wheatfield facility inspired their early & keen interest in the US Space Program as Bell developed the rocket belt, Mercury spacecraft control subsystems and the Lunar Landing Research Vehicle for NASA. Jean was privileged to see both the first and last space shuttle launches as well as many other rocket launches from the patio of her beloved condo in Titusville, FL, just across the river from the Kennedy Space Center. Jean also loved spending time at her family cottage "The Black Rock Club" in Turkey Point, Ontario, playing all kinds of card games, especially Texas Hold'em, and fishing with anyone who was willing to go to the latest perch hole. She was pleased to count as her "Canadian family" her many beloved friends and neighbors there. Jean continued her love affair with horses studying "Advanced Thoroughbred Training" and owning several horses at the Fort Erie racetrack.

Jean was the eternal optimist. Even when skies were cloudy and grey, she'd

say "There's enough blue up there to make a Dutchman a pair of pants". Rest In Peace, Jean. We look forward to joining you in the great beyond!

Jean M. (Sander) Kroetsch, 95, of North Tonawanda, Sunday, January 1, 2023 at home, surrounded by family, under the care of Niagara Hospice. Born in Buffalo, New York on April 5, 1927 to George H. and Irene E. (née Pfalzer) Sander. Jean was a member of Our Lady Czestochowa Church. She was predeceased by her husband Walter R. Kroetsch. Mother of Christine M. Kroetsch (Jeremiah Hayes), Mary .L (Charles) Burngasser, Mark W. (Mary E.), Jeanette A. (Daniel) Woodward, John F. (Pam) and Paul J. (Michele) Kroetsch; s i s t e r in law of Marcy Acker (late James Sander), sister of Richard (Gale)

Sander, and the late Donald (Carol) Sander, Robert (Carolyn) Sander, Ruth Sander Englert (Charles), Sr. Mary Elizabeth Sander, RSM, Joseph (Lois) Sander. Grandmother of 15, Great Grandmother of 16. Also surviving are many nieces and nephews.

Friends may call Wednesday from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. and 7:00 to 9:00 P.M. at the Wattengel Funeral Home, 533 Meadow Drive, North Tonawanda. Mass of Christian Burial will be held Thursday at 9:30 A.M. from Our Lady Czestochowa

Church, 64 Center Ave. North Tonawanda, NY 14120. Mass will be live-streamed at OLC-NT.org.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to Niagara Hospice.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 4. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Wattengel Funeral Home (Meadow Drive)
533 Meadow Drive
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 693-0440
wattengelfh@gmail.com
<https://www.wattengel.com>

Second Visitation

JAN 4. 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

Wattengel Funeral Home (Meadow Drive)
533 Meadow Drive
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 693-0440
wattengelfh@gmail.com
<https://www.wattengel.com>

Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 5. 9:30 AM (ET)

Our Lady of Czestochowa Church
626 Oliver Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 693-3822

Tribute Wall



“ 313 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Wattengel Funeral Home - January 04, 2023 at 12:07 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Jean M. Kroetsch.



January 04, 2023 at 12:04 PM



“ *I met Jean when I started at City Hall; some months later she asked me to fill a vacancy in the Treasures Office. She was the best boss I have ever worked for and made it easy to become her friend. Through Jean I learned so much about seeing the positive in people. Years later she helped me to run for office. I am so fortunate that she was a friend; she & I talked a few weeks ago. She was always witty & we would laugh together. I will miss you but thankful you were my friend. My condolences to Jean's family.*

Shirley Fiedyn - January 04, 2023 at 10:45 AM

NM

“ Jean was a wonderful woman who was so full of life !!
Remembering countless nights of playing cards , laughing and
enjoying her company . She always treated me as family , she will
be greatly missed. My deepest sympathies and love to the whole
family . I will be gifting Niagara Hospice in her name .Nancy
McGeough

Nancy McGeough - January 04, 2023 at 09:57 AM

ML

“ One heck of a woman!! She lived her life to the fullest. She was an
incredibly strong, independent woman who always spoke her mind.
I had the privilege of spending a few precious moments with her.
We always had a good time. We were convinced we were related,
way back on the family tree, some cousin of a cousin. That suited
me; I always felt like part of her family. I will surely miss you. I raise
my gin & tonic to you; I am happy you left the way you wanted to
and thank you for letting me in your life.

Margaret Lazarus and Mike Hachee

margaret lazarus - January 04, 2023 at 08:31 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of
Jean M. Kroetsch.



January 03, 2023 at 04:50 PM

RM

“ *Mark and I had to take their boat from the back yard to who knows where? The only room in the truck was on my lap. We laugh the whole trip. What a wonderful, beautiful, funny Lady! Welcome to Gods race track. Ray*

raymond james mangus - January 03, 2023 at 04:31 PM

FE

“ *From Mike and Nancy Erickson. purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Jean M. Kroetsch.*



From Mike and Nancy Erickson. - January 03, 2023 at 03:58 PM

TK

“ *With heavy hearts we would like to express our sincere sympathy and condolences.
Always being referred to as Katie and Jerry from Canada, GJ always treated us like family. She had such a kind and big heart she treated everyone like family. GJ was a very wise person with funny and interesting stories of her life. We will definately miss her here in Turkey Point and we will miss all the card games.
RIP Jean, we love you dearly. Love the Kulyks*

The Kulyk's - January 03, 2023 at 01:16 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Jean M. Kroetsch.*



January 03, 2023 at 12:11 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Jean M. Kroetsch.*



January 03, 2023 at 08:52 AM



“ *All my prayers and thoughts go out to you Paul and your family. Jean will be missed. Wonderful person and mother. Love, Aunt Barbara*

barbara a kulju - January 02, 2023 at 10:22 PM



“ *My deepest and sincerest sympathies to the whole family. I can almost hear her say, “now listen, I love you all and I’m at peace with my Lord”*

Beth Schmidt - January 02, 2023 at 10:14 PM

AB

“ *All our Love, Patti and Patrick Buczek purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Jean M. Kroetsch.*



All our Love, Patti and Patrick Buczek - January 02, 2023 at 09:27 PM

JS

“ *So sorry for the families lost. I first met Jean 13 yrs ago when my wife and I purchased our property from her. She immediately became our friend and I always enjoyed listening to stories about her life. She will be missed. The Spence's from Walter drive.*

Jon Spence - January 02, 2023 at 09:21 PM

JH

“ *Such an amazing lady. So ahead of her time, classy but never stuffy. Always lived life to the fullest, committed to her beautiful family but also to her community. So grateful to have had this very special lady in my life and to call her my other Mom.*

Janet Herman - January 02, 2023 at 09:12 PM