



Alva Jane Graham

February 4, 1938 - January 29, 2023

Alva Jane Graham, beloved wife, sister, mother, grandmother, gourmet and gourmand, cancer survivor, 'Paulista', and friend to all who knew her died peacefully on January 29th, days shy of her 85th birthday.

She was born on February 4, 1938 in São Paulo, Brazil, the oldest child of Ialmar and Marion Castello. Jane and her siblings were bi-lingual from the start, a rarity in those days, the result of her mother being a Chicagoan and her Brazilian father having learned English during dental school in the U.S. Ialmar's was a successful practice. His U.S.-based training was a draw for many of his countrymen, and as the only English-speaking dentist in a city then of two million, his services were sought by many American expatriates. He also had family and social ties to many in Brazil's elite class—landed gentry, captains of industry, former presidents—and as a result, Jane and her siblings enjoyed a comfortable, if not charmed, upbringing.

After completing high school at São Paulo's Colégio Ofélia Fonseca, Jane attended Lake Forest College for a year, then returned home and continued her collegiate career at the Escola Livre de Sociologia e Política. In 1960 she was working at Avon in São Paulo when she reluctantly gave in to a match-making friend's insistence that she meet a certain American graduate student who was in town. It was a conditional agreement. Jane would be watching from an upstairs window at her home when her friend arrived with said visitor.

If he didn't pass visual inspection, word would quickly be sent downstairs that, alas, Jane wasn't feeling well. As she recalled years later with a smile, "the instant I saw him step out of the car, I knew there wasn't going to be a problem." The mystery guest was Doug Graham, studying in Brazil on a Fulbright Fellowship. In short order, Doug won over everyone in the house that day, and three months later he and Jane were married.

They moved to Boston where Doug began work on his Ph.D. in economics at Harvard. It was during those years that Jane began to experiment in the kitchen for the first time. Growing up in a household where servants did the cooking, Jane didn't give much thought to how delicious meals made their way to the table. But she was a quick study, and her repertoire eventually included not only Brazilian cuisine, with its signature national meal, Feijoada, but fare from many other culinary traditions. Jane became a foodie long before the term existed, and over the ensuing decades her expertise in the kitchen, whether experimenting or delivering on classic, often international, recipes was acclaimed by family, friends, and guests.

She enjoyed a six-year homecoming to Brazil in the late 1960s and early 70s when Doug accepted professorships in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The enriching imprint of those Brazil years on Jane's children, the youngest of whom were born there, would be lifelong. Upon her return stateside, when Doug joined Ohio State University in 1973, Jane readjusted again to the (servant-less) demands of managing a household in the U.S., and embraced her new life in central Ohio with its state fairs, parent-teacher conferences, and Buckeye football games.

But her Latin American sensibilities were never far from the surface. She retained an abiding love for the culture, art, and music of her homeland. She was a perennial optimist, quick to see the humorous in most situations. She took great pleasure in dining out, sharing long unhurried meals, often tasting

multiple dishes and engaging the restaurant staff in conversation. And she was never shy behind the wheel, her assertive driving making her one of the more popular car pool moms.

Pets were another constant in Jane's life. In addition to the many dogs and cats who were veritable family members over the years, she welcomed a variety of less conventional fauna into her household: tortoises, monitor lizards, boa constrictors, parrots, even a monkey.

But first and foremost was the cooking. Even in Jane's final years, robbed of coordination and mobility by advanced kyphosis and Parkinson's disease, often in pain, she stubbornly refused to let go the one thing that brought her so much purpose, and insisted on staying active in her kitchen, if only for brief spells. When this was no longer possible, she reached out by phone to the kitchens of family and friends, participating from afar. Cooking, as the saying goes, was an expression of love for Jane. One of her idols, Julia Child, once advised "Find something you're passionate about, and keep tremendously interested in it." That she did.

Her journey's end came as a release, freeing her to don her apron once again.

Jane is preceded in death by her brother Ialmar Jr. ("Marito") and sister Sylvia. She is survived by Doug, after nearly 63 years together, her children, Doug Jr. (Beth), Cristina (Paul) Nagy, Geoffrey (Jessica), Andrew (Heriona), and cherished grandchildren David, Connor, Will, Kate, Ian, Bjorn, and Maddie.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation (www.parkinson.org).

Information on Jane's memorial service can be found at www.mykeeper.com/event/alva-jane-grahams-upcoming-memorial-service/

Tribute Wall

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“ *Jane had a wonderful zest for life and it was contagious!* ”

Chaplain Jim Faas - April 12, 2023 at 01:35 PM