



Sallie Thompson Soule

May 13, 1928 - June 11, 2019

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Loving wife, mother, and mentor to many, Sallie Soule, 91, long of Shelburne, Vermont and lately of Fort Myers, Florida, died on June 11, 2019 in Fort Myers after a life well lived. Sallie was born in Detroit on May 13, 1928 and was raised in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. She was the second of three daughters born to Hayward and Elizabeth Thompson. Sarah Goodwin Thompson, as an elementary school student, adopted the name Sallie and it stayed with her throughout her life. She graduated from Milton Academy in Massachusetts in 1946 and went on to earn a B.A. in History from Smith College in 1950. An active Vermont Democrat, it would surprise many to know that she wrote her thesis at The University of Vermont (UVM) on the formation of the Republican party in the state of Vermont. She earned her M.A. from UVM in 1952.

Following her studies at UVM, she moved to New York City and worked for Macmillan Publishing. In 1957 she moved to Rochester, New York where she met her future husband, Gardner Northup Soule and they were married in

Charlotte, Vermont on July 26, 1958. For ten years she worked at the Brighton-Pittsford Post, a suburban weekly, in the Rochester, NY area, writing feature articles and profiles. In 1968 the Soule family moved to Vermont to make their home on Shelburne Point.

As a couple, Sallie and Gardner were continual supports to one another, be it in business or in community affairs, although they were not always on the same page politically. Together, they purchased Horsford's Nursery in Charlotte which Sallie managed for almost a decade. Sallie and Gardner were the co-chairs of the first Vermont Public Television auction in 1975. In 1976, Sallie was asked to run for the Vermont Legislature as a Democrat representing both Shelburne and Charlotte. In that tight election year, she didn't know if she had won until 11PM when the town clerk told her her pile of ballots was higher! She was reelected in 1978 and, in 1980, she ran for the State Senate to represent Chittenden County, and was the only Democrat from outside of the "Burlington Block". She won her seat in the Senate with a campaign fund of just \$2000. She even managed to get her husband's vote (Gardner was a lifelong Republican and he often commented that she was the only Democrat he ever voted for willingly). She was again successful in the 1982 Senatorial campaign. Sallie earned a reputation as an honest politician who would always listen to both sides and then state exactly where she stood on an issue. She was particularly well known for her support of issues important to women and mental health advocates.

Believing in term limits, Sallie chose not to run for reelection in 1984. At that time the Burlington Free Press headlined an editorial that acknowledged her tenure in Montpelier "A Champion Bows Out". They highlighted her work on

the Appropriations, Energy, Natural Resources and Administrative Rules Committees and as a legislative representative to the Vermont Judicial Nominating Board. She then became Commissioner of Employment and Training, now the Department of Labor, in May of 1985 in the administration of Vermont's first woman governor, her dear friend Madeleine Kunin. While serving in that role, she and Gretchen Morse, who was Commissioner of Health and Human Services, created the Reach Up Program, foundation of the Champlain College Single Parent Program.

During her political career, Sallie was in business with four women friends who together, in 1978, founded Bygone Book, a used bookstore located on lower Main Street in Burlington. Her partners were Betty Van Buren and the late Barbara Wadhams, Jane Tormey, and Priscilla Welsh. The business dissolved in 1998, but the devoted friendships were lasting.

The National Governor's Association recognized Sallie for Distinguished Service to State Government. Other accolades continued throughout her life, the most recent coming two years ago, when, in 2017, she was the recipient of the first annual Madeleine Kunin Lifetime Achievement Award by Emerge Vermont.

Sallie was active in her local community in a myriad of ways. A founding director of the Vermont Women's Health Center, the Vermont Community Foundation and the Vermont Women's Fund. She was chair of the Vermont

Employment Security Board and served on the boards of the Preservation Trust Vermont, Vermont Council on the Arts, Vermont Public Television, and Wake Robin retirement community. Governor Kunin named her to the UVM Board of Trustees in 1989. She later served on the UVM Advisory Board for the College of Arts and Sciences and was a member of the Advisory Board for the College of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences.

Sallie adored her husband, her family, her community and the beautiful state of Vermont. While wintering in Florida she was an active volunteer at the Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation for 20 years. She cared deeply about books, bridge, backgammon, and the environment. The only regret she had in life was that she never reached the summit of Camel's Hump!

Sallie's loving husband died in 2006. She was predeceased by her parents, and her elder sister, Katharine Thompson Serrell. She is survived by the loves of her life, her daughter, Sarah Goodwin Soule, of Shelburne, her son, Trumbull Dickson Soule and his wife, Linda, of Ellicott City, Maryland, her stepson, Gardner N. Soule, Jr., and his wife, Sally, of Victor, NY, and her stepdaughter, Nancy Soule Carroll, and her husband, Edward, of Brevard, NC. She leaves six grandchildren, Peter Soule, Heidi Soule, and Molly Fenster, Chloe Brown, Elizabeth Soule Cameron, and Amanda Franklin, and their families, including seven great grandchildren, Sabra and Hazel Goveia, Eleanor and Andrew Soule, Oscar, Isaac, and Evelyn Fenster. Her sister, Marion Thompson Adams of Exeter, NH survives her along with numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial service for the benefit of neighbors in Florida will be held at the Village Church at Shell Point, Fort Myers, FL at 10:15AM on Saturday, June 15 with Pastor John Danner of the Sanibel Congregational Church of Christ presiding. A Celebration of Life for her friends and family will be held at the Charlotte Congregational Church in Charlotte, Vermont at 3PM on Sunday, July 7. She and Gardner were married in that church. Interment at the Thompson-Stone-Patrick Mausoleum at Lakeview Cemetery will be private. She will be interred with five generations of her family. In lieu of flowers, donations in Sallie's honor can be sent to the Vermont Women's Fund, c/o Vermont Community Foundation, 3 Court Street, Middlebury, VT 05753 or Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ, 2050 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, FL 33957

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUN 15. 10:15 AM (ET)

The Village Church at Shell Point
15100 Shell Point Blvd
Fort Myers, FL 33908
(239) 454-2147

A Celebration of Life

JUL 7. 3:00 PM (ET)

Charlotte Congregational Church
403 Church Hill Rd
Charlotte, VT 05445
(802) 425-3176

Tribute Wall



“ *Sallie Thompson Soule*

October 09, 2023 at 02:01 AM



“ *Sallie Thompson Soule*

January 28, 2023 at 12:09 PM



“ *I have been an admirer of Sallie’s brilliant mind and generous heart since first meeting her during the forming of the Vermont Women’s Health Center in 1972 when her leadership was essential to getting it established. I have followed her career since and held her in high esteem as a spokesperson for women in Vermont and a role model for women in business and public service. She has been a shining light in our state for advancing the status of women and improving the wellbeing of all Vermonters. Hers was a life well lived.*

Sally Ballin - August 24, 2019 at 08:22 AM



“ *I first met Sallie during Governor Madeleine Kunin's first term in that office. That was, and remains, a shining time. Sallie was, in a word, AWESOME! So full of energy and compassion, so kind yet frank, so dedicated in every cell to serving the people and doing it well.*

Thanks for your inspiration, still burning bright over all of these years!!

*Walt Morris
Lyndonville, VT*

Walter Morris - June 21, 2019 at 01:31 PM

CP

“ We have so many fond memories of both Sallie and Gard. We feel honored to have known them both. Very special people. Our thoughts and prayers to Sarah and Trumble

*Connie & Jack Provencher
Canaan, VT*

Connie Provencher - June 19, 2019 at 02:43 PM

DS

“ Sallie was a wonderful friend to my parents, Bill and Jane Saunders, at Shell Point Retirement Community from their time in the mid-rises through assisted living at Kings Crown. Dad gave many book reports at the meetings she organized and she took over for Dad as the Court Rep for Kings Crown after he died in 2017. I enjoyed so much talking politics with Sallie, a like-minded Democrat. She will be missed!

*David Saunders
Los Angeles, California*

David Saunders - June 17, 2019 at 09:43 AM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Sallie Thompson Soule.



June 15, 2019 at 08:49 AM

MA

“ *Sallie Sallie Sallie!!! Jane and I were talking about you yesterday! Wondering how you were and recalling what a wonderful woman you are.were. Wow... I'm so grateful to have known you...you were really an amazing person...and I know how lucky my mom and I were to have known you. Oxo - my thoughts are with you, Sarah. —Martha Tormey. Damn. Bye Sallie.*

marthatormey - June 14, 2019 at 08:14 PM

ML

“ *Sallie was an inspiration to all women who knew her from several generations of fans -- both my mom (Alice Lowman) and I (Alice's daughter, Meg) admired her grit, her creativity, and her intellect. We recall a wonderful day at her Trout Club near Stowe, Vermont -- where Sallie was in her element! Thank you, Sallie!*

Meg Lowman - June 14, 2019 at 05:26 PM

JR

“ Dear Sarah and Trum and other members of Sallie's family.

Sallie really knew how to be a good friend. Though she met my parents, Mel and Shirley Bleiberg, when they were all in their "golden years", she quickly became one of their favorite people. Sallie seemed to know the right question to ask or the right joke to make at a given moment. Of course, we all loved talking politics with her, both local to Shellpoint and national. Sallie served as a leader of her community even in her final days, discussing with my father who would be best to take over the local representation at Kings Crown.

I know my father will really miss her. He respected her wisdom, her book recommendations and her zest for life.

I hope that happy memories of Sallie during her full life will bring you comfort during this difficult time.

*Warmly,
Judy Remz*

Judy Remz - June 14, 2019 at 04:31 PM

KA

“ There was a certain sound of Sallie's cane and stride as she walked down the halls at the Sanibel Captiva Conservation Foundation. When introduced to new staff her first question was always accompanied by the cane pointed their way "Are you registered to vote yet?"

Sallie also sheltered me in her home on Bunting when I was not feeling well. She was generous to both my husband Red and I with the use of the house on stormy nights when the commute to North Captiva was too rough.

Here 100 year old friend Jane always remarked how Sallie never complained. She could be in pain or limited in her mobility but was always ready for a game of Boggle, Scrabble or anything else that kept her mind sharp.

She loved Gard so much. Her sadness was not worn on her sleeve but deep in her heart.

I will miss her deeply. Kristie Anders

Kristie Anders - June 14, 2019 at 01:40 PM

AT

“ It was a great honor and privileged to know Sallie through my friendship with her daughter Sarah. Their bond was as deep and loving as any I've ever known. It was a joy to attend many seasons of St Mike's Theater with Sallie and Sarah and feel included in their warm circle. My thoughts are with your family, Andrea

Andrea Torello - June 14, 2019 at 10:49 AM

MR

“ I met Sallie when she was a resident in assisted living in Shell Point with my parents. An inspiration and a joy to know! Always active and inquisitive, informed and friendly. Blessed to have bonded over our Smith connection (I'm '74). Thinking of you and your loss but know that your wonderful memories will sustain you.
Martha Redeker

Martha Redeker - June 14, 2019 at 10:19 AM

 Sandra Bryant

“ Sarah, I'm sorry to hear of the passing of your mom. Prayers to you and your family.

Sandy Bryant

Sandra Bryant - June 13, 2019 at 02:58 PM