

Angel on Earth

Jane VanDeBogart passes at 67



by Paul Smart and Brian Hollander

In winter, it could be near zero degrees on Sundays on the Village Green; in spring it would pour down rain. Even through the dripping humidity of August, Women in Black would (and will still) stand silently in vigil, seeking peace, yearning for justice, and their presence and persistence will a moving reminder that all is not right with the world — and that acting peacefully can provide the greatest resistance to such ills.

And always there was Jarie, living her convictions, in the middle of it. She never complained and with her mates, shouldered some of our burdens, made the protest we felt, made our point for us.

You wouldn't have known that she was in the midst of a long struggle with cancer. She didn't speak of it and if you asked her about it, it would be, 'well, you know...' and on to another subject. She looked great, sounded committed to her work and community.

But Jane VanDeBogart, the former Woodstock town councilwoman who many have described as a key to the town's sense of conscience, died Saturday, February 16 at home on Glasco Turnpike at the age of 67. She was surrounded by friends at the end of her long struggle. But she kept up her sense of hope and active participation in causes and community until the very end.

The tributes have poured in to this newspaper and to the CaringBridge website, www.caringbridge.org/visit/vandebogart, a "non-profit web service that connects family and friends during a critical illness, treatment

'You've been a pillar of the community. A guide. A touchstone.'

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or recovery." (See accompanying story.)

Fellow activist Judith Karpova wrote, "I can't believe Jane is gone. She had the energy and conviction and vitality of ten people! A ferocious drive that was still full of humor and goodwill, to bring about justice, spread information, engage our whole region in being responsible for our country and our world."

"You've been a pillar of the community," wrote noted author and activist Jeff Cohen, founder of FAIR (Freedom and Accuracy in Reporting). "A guide. A touchstone."

Ed and Miriam Sanders, recalled "the history of your wonderful work to relieve human suffering, promote racial harmony, create the international foundations for lasting peace, and promote sound local government."



apollitical Wiltryck Quilters Guild.

She was a founding member of STAT, a group that came together last year to oppose the merger of local secular hospitals with the Benedictine hospital be-

cause of the threatened losses to reproductive health systems, including family planning and women's choice opportunities. She was also a supporter of MergerWatch and Family Planning Advocates of NYS.

"One of Jane's recent major accomplishments is in the process of coming to fruition, wrote Don and Linda Gregorius. "Her work, along with other dedicated people, had a direct impact on Women's Reproductive Rights in the merger of Benedictine and Kingston Hospitals."

On a non-political level, Jane quilted, practiced origami, loved gardening, was a member of the Bard Community Chorus, and was on a first name basis with all elements of the diverse Woodstock community, from current town board members and our state and national

Staying connected

As Jane VanDeBogart entered her final day, an e-mail subject-titled with her name went out from her online AOL account to her vast network of friends and acquaintances.

"Dear Friends, We found your address in Jane's email address book and thought you would appreciate knowing that she is critically ill. For more information, please go to the site," it read. "To facilitate the sharing of information, we've created a CaringBridge site to keep you up to date... CaringBridge is a nonprofit organization that helps friends and families stay connected."

A link took one directly to a website filled with journal entries on how VanDeBogart was, messages wishing her well, and an increasing number of images as the days progressed.

A check with CaringBridge found that the website, and underlying Minnesota-based company, was founded in 1997 by Sona Mehring as a means of keeping people aware of a mutual friend's life-threatening pregnancy, to which she eventually succumbed.

"The website allowed the family to convey this saddest of news without the painful burden of several emotional phone calls. The parents also had a place to post a final message to honor Brightid and their supportive online community," the website says of its own history. "Brightid's death prompted an outpouring of loving messages to the family. They immediately understood that other patients dealing with the birth of a premature baby, childhood cancer or other critical illness would benefit from the same web resources. A memorial fund, created in Brightid's memory, enabled Children's Hospital in St. Paul to dedicate a computer and Internet access for patients and families



was a town councilwoman from 1975 to 1984, the years in which the town board guided the municipality through the difficult process of constructing a sewer system to clean the town's streams and keep it open for business.

But her list of service went on much longer. She served as a member and president of the Woodstock Library Board of Trustees; she was an assistant to the town assessor, and a long-time secretary to the town Planning Board through the years during which Woodstock rewrote and passed its current law.

She was a cartographer, also, producing the clearest maps of Woodstock even yet in use.

As a lifelong Democrat, VanDeBogart had a penchant for idealistic underdogs, working for the Jonathan Tasini senate campaign against incumbent Hillary Clinton two years ago and for working for Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich during his last two presidential campaigns, collecting signatures even while she was in the hospital.

Jane founded Woodstock Women in Black, the local chapter of a global peace organization; served on the town's Martin Luther King Day Committee for several years; and was deeply involved with Veterans for Peace, the Saugerties Committee for Peace and Social Justice, and Quilters for Peace, a group that grew out of her membership in the countywide but



Jane at work.

a degree in elementary education from Antioch College in Ohio and taught in St. Louis prior to moving to Woodstock as the wife of Aaron VanDeBogart, well known local forester and naturalist, from whom she was later divorced.

She is predeceased by her parents and her brother Carl, her aunt Elisabeth Freeman, and John Johnston, a cousin for whom she was an important caregiver during a long illness. She is survived by her aunt and uncle, Ruth and Bob Johnston, her cousin Peg, and her 'brother' Allan Troxler. She will be fondly remembered by her cousins Ken Johnston and Susan Jenkins.

As a young woman, Jane joined civil rights efforts in the South and also traveled to Cuba in defiance of the State Department, setting a legal precedent for Americans' ability to travel to sanctioned countries. She visited Cuba and other Latin American countries several times and was a supporter of CLASP, US-El Salvador Sister Cities, Disarm/Cuban Medical Project, Haitian Refugee Support and various other organizations doing work in Latin America.

Locally she supported, and urged others to support Family of Woodstock, CLASP, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, Daily Bread Soup Kitchen, the Rosenberg Children's Fund, RESIST, the War Resister's League, Syracuse Cultural Workers, and Doctors without Borders.

"Selfless, patient, kind, passionate, gentle," were

homeless, for whom she served as something of an "always there to listen" mother figure.

She participated in the Peace Ribbon surrounding the Pentagon, the AIDS Quilt Project, the Woodstock Bicentennial Quilt, and several peace quilts.

She came from New Jersey. Jane was born in January, 1941, in Paramus, the daughter of the late Walter and Jeanette Wittman. She received

Today, the site goes on, CaringBridge sets up and operates approximately 90,000 sites, in over 40 countries, each year. Over three million have used the service, with over 130 million visitors. The not-for-profit, funded by foundations as well as individual gifts, operates at about \$2 million a year.

"CaringBridge website helps keep loved ones informed during difficult times. In return, family and friends give patient and caregiver support through guestbook messages," is how they explain themselves, noting use by those undergoing cancer treatment, premature births, Organ transplants, military deployment, war injury, Hospice care, chronic illness, strokes, hospitalization, rehabilitation, recovery and the rigors of international adoption. "Every free, personalized CaringBridge website includes a patient care journal to update family and friends, a guestbook for messages of love, a photo gallery, and free online support for using the service."

In other words, it's a good thing, pure and simple as those whose lives it helps, and or touches.

For further information, visit www.CaringBridge.org. ++

with hundreds leaving messages attesting to the many ways in which the late Jane had touched their lives. "Compassionate, enthusiastic, forceful, positive, committed, inspirational, principled, fearless," were among the many more.

"My tears stream as I write to thank you for being a beautiful, strong, intelligent, and caring role model for younger women like me," wrote March Gallagher, the Saugerties attorney who is now president of the county Industrial Development Agency. "Thank you for all you did and said and wrote..."

And from Betty MacDonald: "I believe there are angels on earth — some that we can see and many more unseen who surround us as we journey through this life. You are one of those sweet angels living among us, devoting yourself to the creation of love and peace. Your indefatigable spirit is part of our Woodstock community forever. Love you, dear Jane. ++

Remembering Jane

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...gery site will be memorial
...activist Jane VanDeBogart

IL KIRBY
...n staff

■ KINGSTON — For many years, Jane VanDeBogart fought among other things, the of women, not the of which was a right to e whether to have an ion.

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Shuman

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...DeBogart collaborated in
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...e memorial at the Fox-
...Ambulatory Surgery
...er is fitting.



VanDeBogart

"She spent every waking moment making sure that reproductive services would continue," Shuman said. "She was quite a force to be reck-

oned with."

VanDeBogart, who was a founding member of Health-Care STAT, even fought as she battled her cancer at the end.

Schuman said she was "so unrelenting in her commitment to women's reproductive rights that she held meetings of the group Health Care STAT in her hospital room at Benedictine."

SHUMAN SAID that there are plans to establish a memorial outside of the surgery center which is expected to be completed in February. The memorial is expected to include the placement of a bench, built with a mosaic pattern, at the center.

In addition, the memorial will include a plaque, as well as landscaping around the entire spot, Shuman said.

Shuman said that VanDeBogart, who also supported dozens of other community organizations including Family of Woodstock, was not one to easily

accept accolades for her work.

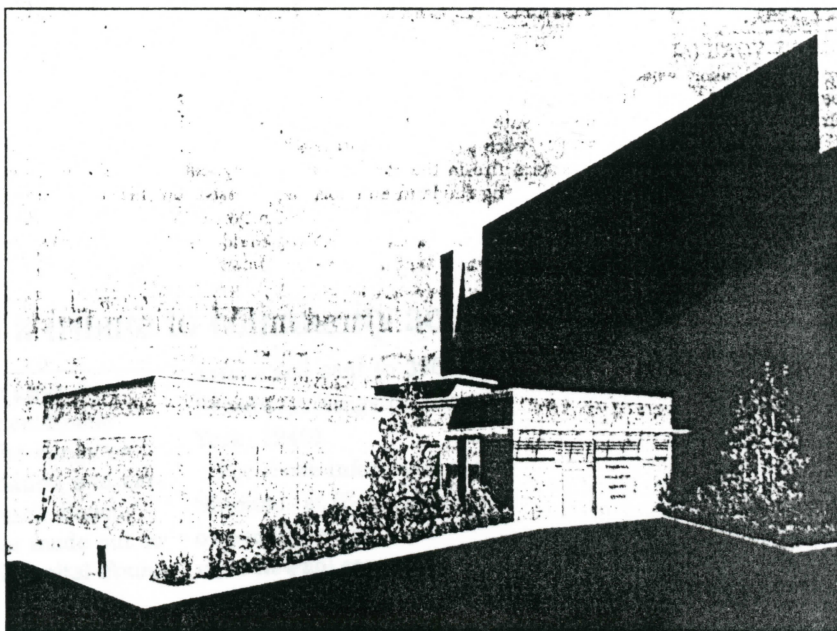
Of the memorial, she would probably react the same way, Schuman said.

"She would be very modest and very humble," Shuman said.

Organizers of the memorial are attempting raise funds to complete it. The goal is to raise \$6,000.

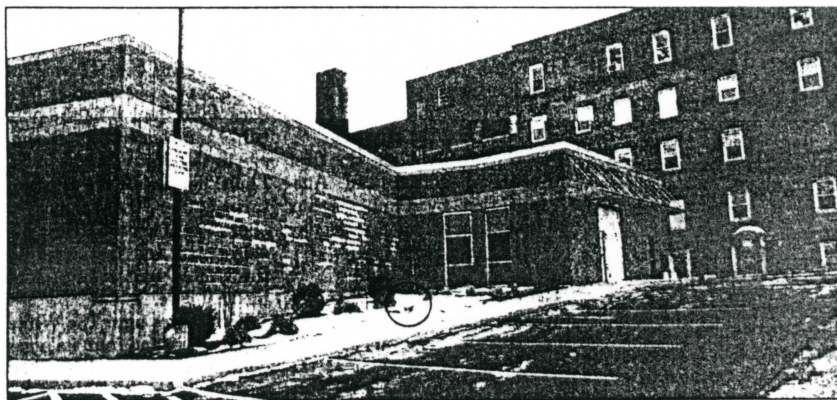
If anyone would like to con-

See Memorial, page A6



Rendering by Scott Dutton Associates

The memorial bench is planned for the spot outside the Foxhall Ambulatory Surgery Center shown in the black circle on the architect's rendering, above, and in the photograph of the under-construction facility, below.



Freeman photos by Tania Barrickio



Jane VanDeBogart, at right, is shown protesting with Women in Black.

Photo provided

Memorial a tribute to community activist

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tribute, they should send
donations to The Kingston
Hospital Foundation and ear-
marked for "Jane's Bench."

Checks can be made out to
The Kingston Hospital Foun-

dation and sent to 396
Broadway, Kingston, New
York, 12401.

For more information, call
Shuman at (845) 687-0878
or e-mail her at
miracle@aol.com.