

## Obituary for Judith Fay Lightfoot of Lyme

Judith Fay Lightfoot, civic leader, mentor, friend, and beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, died on May 19 at age 81 at her home in Lyme, Connecticut. Intelligent, caring, generous, and grateful until her last breath, Judy moved in the world with deep optimism, love, and grace as she tirelessly and determinedly worked to make that world a better and more beautiful place. A natural leader with a brilliant, ever-present smile, she inspired all who crossed her path, whether family, friend, colleague, or stranger, to discover and share their best selves. As one family member wrote, "Saying she had a way with people would be a tremendous understatement. She showed us the way with people."

Born September 14, 1939, in New York City, Judy was the adored daughter of Robert L. Fay and Margaret Leavenworth Fay and older sister of Robert L. Fay, Jr. She attended public schools in Rye, New York, and Wallingford, Connecticut, and the Day Prospect Hill School in New Haven, where she was valedictorian and class president. She attended Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1959, she married Richard Lightfoot, moving with her new husband to Hawaii, where he was teaching, and then to Massachusetts so he could attend law school. In 1961, she wholeheartedly embraced her role as a mother with the arrival of their first child, Alexandra, who was followed in short order by Elizabeth, Ann, and John.

Even as she was busy providing idyllic childhoods for her four children, and later providing worlds of joy and magic for her 13 grandchildren, Judy found time to make a profound difference in the communities around her. Long active in civic matters, she served as president and trustee of High Hopes Therapeutic Riding of Old Lyme; president and trustee of The Lyme Public Library; president and trustee of North American Riding for the Handicapped (now PATH International), Denver; president and trustee of Horses and Humans Foundation, Cleveland; trustee of Day Prospect Hill School, New Haven; secretary and trustee of Hopkins School, New Haven; secretary and trustee of Lyme Public Library Foundation, Lyme; and president of the Westchester, New York, Council of Junior Leagues. In recognition of her service on behalf of people with disabilities, Judy was invited to the White House for the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act and in 1995 was honored with the James Brady Professional Achievement Award, which recognizes contributions made in the field of equine assisted activities and therapies. In 1998, she was cited for her public service by *The Hartford Courant*, and the Board of Directors' conference room at the Lyme Public Library is named in her honor.

Although Judy's list of accomplishments is long, it was her gift for galvanizing others to work together to create lasting change that made her presence in any community so invaluable. As an early volunteer for what was then known as LCVERA (Lower Connecticut Valley Educational Riding Association) and later became High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, Judy saw the transformative potential of therapeutic riding and helped the program grow into the international leader it is today. In her roles at NARHA and Horses and Humans Foundation, she elevated the conversation about the human-animal bond and skillfully and strategically engaged others in this work. During her 31 years of service to the Lyme Public Library, most of them as Board President, she helped the library win multiple awards for excellence, obtain important

collections, and raise funds for the construction of a new, 6,800-square-foot, state-of-the-art library and community center, an undertaking she first championed and then helped shepherd through construction and completion.

Together, Judy and her partner-in-all-things, Dick, spearheaded countless friend- and fund-raising events to support the nonprofits they believed in, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars and engaging thousands of new volunteers and friends so these ventures could live on and grow well beyond Judy's and Dick's involvement. A natural-born teacher, Judy was brilliant at inspiring others to hone their own special gifts, encouraging them to share their talents in collaborative support of the common good. A friend and colleague who worked with her on a local board described Judy as a "community icon." Another who served alongside her on a national board wrote about her "boundless kindness, leadership, analytical ability, and humor," adding that she was "unmatched as a mentor and a role model for many of us."

Outside of her public roles, Judy was a great friend to all children, giving every young person she encountered the gift of unconditional love. A true baby-whisperer, she was able to calm the most colicky infant and redirect the most obstinate toddler, and among her greatest joys was welcoming a new family member into the world. Even in her last days, Judy was never happier than when she looked into the eyes of a baby, whether those eyes were in a photo or on the face of her first great-grandchild, at whom she beamed with unbridled delight in the days before she died.

Dick and Judy started out their married life in Honolulu and, over the last two decades, enjoyed spending winters on the island of Molokai, which reminded them of the Honolulu of the late 50s. Throughout their marriage, they enjoyed travel to destinations across the globe, including Brazil, Egypt, Greenland, Kenya, Niger, and Thailand.

Much as she loved Hawaii and discovering new places and people, though, Judy loved her home in Lyme the most. Her fervent wish, expressed repeatedly over the years, was that she be able to spend her final days at Twin Brooks Farm, the bucolic property she and Dick have called home for 35 years. Her family is thrilled that she got her wish, and they thank her caregivers, Larissa Kilassonia, Siba Sibiya, Mary Mather, and Lynn Farrell, for their invaluable assistance in making it possible.

Judy is survived by her husband of 61 years, Dick, and their four children and their spouses, Alexandra Lightfoot (Thomas Kelley) of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Elizabeth Lightfoot (Nicholas Clements) of Lyme, Ann Lightfoot (Faulkner Hunt) of Lyme, and John Lightfoot (Apollonia Morrill) of Berkeley, California. Also surviving her are 13 grandchildren, Bowen, Aidan, and Hugh Kelley; Graeme, Isabel (Kevin Smith), Alastair, and Honor Clements; Joab, Henry, Agatha, and Beatrice Hunt; Rose and Olive Lightfoot; and one great-grandchild, Finn Smith. Her brother, Robert L. Fay, Jr. and his wife Carolyn, of Northford, Connecticut, and their family also survive her.

A memorial service will be held at the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, 2 Ferry Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut, on Sunday, June 27 at 3 p.m. Masking and social distancing guidelines will be in place. The family invites donations in Judy's memory to High Hopes Therapeutic Riding, 36 Town Woods Road, Old Lyme, CT 06371, the Lyme Public Library Foundation, 482 Town Street, Lyme, CT 06371, or Molokai College and Career Club, 2140 Farrington Avenue, Hoolehua, HI 96729.