

## Eulogy for Jeannine

Fierce. Our sister Jeannine was fierce.

She was fierce in her passions, fierce in her intelligence, fierce in her love of beauty, art, poetry, music, the written word. Fierce in her own brand of feminism, although I doubt she would have called it that.

She was the first woman in our family to go to college. she graduated Fordham University cum laude.

She was the first to be a Fellow at Columbia University School of East Asian Studies where she received her Masters degree.

She loved all things Japanese and so of course she learned to speak and read and write Japanese and then, in 1961, went to live and work in Tokyo at a time when very few white men, let alone a white woman by herself, lived in post WWII Japan. She travelled extensively throughout the country because she wanted to- by herself.

She was brilliant in so many ways, and her convictions and expansive knowledge combined in a sharp intelligence, and an even sharper sense of humor. She loved the New Yorker cartoons and kept a folder of her favorite ones.

She was fierce in her desire to make a difference in this world. She gave hours of her time to the NJ Council of Jewish Women in Bergen County because she loved the work they did for women in distress. She supported Dress for Success, and the Fresh Air Fund among many charities.

She adored the opera, and would have run away with Pavarotti had he asked her to. I don't believe she ever missed a season at the Met with her Opera friends.

She was fierce in her love of family, and devoted herself to caring for our parents when they were in the final months of their lives. She relished hearing about her nephews, her great-nephews and great-nieces. She was the antipasti queen at every Thanksgiving gathering.

And yet Jeannine was a very private person. She enjoyed her alone time. When you walked into her apartment, you were greeted by a Siberian Tiger rug from Nepal. Stealthy and fierce.

But what I believe is most true about Jeannine was her devotion and loyalty to her friends. She was loving, thoughtful, kind - and fierce when that was needed.

As a good friend of hers recently told us, “Jeannine really LIVED her life”. She did, despite many illnesses that would normally cause a person to lie down or at least sit down. Not Jeannine. She wasn’t going to miss a Museum opening, a dinner out at a new restaurant, an Opera with her dear friends, a trip to Acapulco with Hugette - just because she was in pain or was having trouble breathing. She was fierce. We will miss that fierce fire in her soul.

I would like to read a poem by Mary Oliver that I feel sums up Jeannine’s perspective on this world, and on her death.