



Jean Wright

January 19, 1926 - October 29, 2024

Jean Wright – a long and accomplished life 1.19.26 – 10.29.24

Jean Wright died peacefully in her sleep on October 29, 2024. She lived a long and remarkable life, from rural Kansas to Chicago's North Shore with her final years in Sarasota, Florida.

Jean Wright's parents were Anna Cerrow and Chalmar Mayhew of Plainville, Kansas, a town of 1,746 named for its setting upon the northwest plains. Her grandparents were original homesteaders in Rooks County, Kansas, from the 1870s. Jean had two sisters, Jennie Longnecker and Betty Edson, and two brothers, Delmar Mayhew and Darrell Mayhew. She maintained close ties to her siblings, speaking with them almost every day. She often recounted her memories of the Mayhew family farm where they buried gold in the backyard and the dust storms in the 1930s so thick that the children tied a rope to their front door to find their way home safely.

It took great courage for Jean to leave Kansas for Chicago. She finished her undergraduate degree at Loyola University where she also received an MBA at night. Jean went to work at the Moser Secretarial School, an elite institution with a national reputation for producing highly skilled women trained for the office work force. Upon Dr. Moser's passing, Jean bought the school and its downtown building. To do this she had to mortgage everything she owned and

overcome resistance from bankers reluctant to lend to a woman-owned business.

While owner and President of Moser, Jean met her future husband, Theron Wright, head of human resources at Chicago Title and Trust. After the birth of their son, Theron Wright, Jr, they made their home in Winnetka, Illinois. Jean and Theron loved to dance, travel throughout Europe and cruise the streets of Winnetka in one of Theron's iconic convertibles.

Jean was extraordinarily proud of her son Theron Jr., and their collective resilience in the face of her husband's untimely death in 1971. She loved driving Theron Jr. and his friends to hockey games and being a part of their lives. She was particularly pleased that Theron inherited his father's love of cars, and a real passion and expertise for their technical aspects. Theron Jr. also brought home a wonderful series of dog companions for the family, and Jean marveled in his ability to train them.

Jean discovered the real estate business and began working in 1978 for Continental Realty, soon becoming its top producer. Continental's owner left Jean in charge of the firm while taking a worldwide tour. Upon his return, Jean delivered him an ultimatum: make me your co-owner or I will leave and start my own firm. The owner scoffed at the challenge, telling her that he had three other people to run his business and where was she going to find three people? Jean answered, characteristically: me, myself and I. Within a few years, Jean Wright Real Estate surpassed Continental's sales.

Jean began her new real estate venture at age 59 borrowing extensively from her Moser experience. Jean famously said, Blue Ribbon Quality is what I expected of my students and what I expect of myself and my staff. That was the inspiration behind her Jean Wright Real Estate blue ribbon logo. She built the top independent real estate firm on Chicago's North Shore. Her civic board

contributions were many —Rotary Club, Community House of Winnetka, Winnetka Garden Guild, United Way, Winnetka Congregational Church and local bank boards, to name a few.

Jean moved to Brookdale Palmer Ranch in Sarasota in 2020. In her mid-90s, she became the exercise director. She observed: I know everyone here, and everyone here knows me. Although I can't see, I know everyone's name by their voice, wheelchair or where they sit. She made a point of keeping everyone up to date on what was happening in the world—the date, the weather, the stock market. She was an avid bingo player, relishing the small jackpots that she consistently came her way. I want to live as long as I have a brain, and no longer, she often said. She cherished her family, son and many friends, and always had her phone nearby to stay connected to them.

Jean was a gracious and kind grandmother and great-grandmother, always remembering stories, birthdays and whereabouts. And she was fearless, a risk taker who bought and ran two successful businesses at a time when female entrepreneurs were largely unknown. We will miss her optimism and her lively spirit.

She is survived by her son, Theron Woodward Wright; her siblings, Delmar Mayhew (Bonnie) and Jennie Longnecker (Paul); her grandchildren, Blake Haider (Patrice), Elinor Haider (Matthew Lee), Paul Haider (Francesca Domenella); and six great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her siblings Betty Edson (Victor) and Darrell Mayhew (Beverly); half-siblings, Charlotte Hays (Jared), Gladys Cerrow (Lawrence), Roy Mayhew (Ethel); and step-daughter, Jean Wright Haider (Donald Haider).

A service will be held at the Winnetka Congregational Church on Saturday, February 22 at 10AM followed by a lunch to share stories and celebrate

Jean's very full life. Please join us for both; drop us a note to say you are coming: elinor-haider@outlook.com.

Previous Events

Service

FEB **22**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Winnetka Congregational Church
725 Pine St
Winnetka, IL 60093

Tribute Wall

CD

“ Jean and Theron were so kind to my parents when we moved to Winnetka in 1963. They invited us to Thanksgiving that first fall. My mom and Jean became very close friends and stayed close when my family moved back East. A wonderful human being!



Cynthia Dallmeyer - March 01, 2025 at 08:51 PM

AN

“ Arlene N. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Jean Wright.

Arlene N. - February 19, 2025 at 11:54 AM

BF

“ Jean Wright was a treasured leader in our Real Estate community. I have many fond memories of conversations and friendship with her.
Beverly Fleischman

Beverly Fleischman - December 16, 2024 at 06:05 PM