



Jean M. Low

October 30, 1937 - March 31, 2026

Rye — Jean McLaren Low passed after a brief illness on March 31, 2026.

Jean was born in St.

Johnsbury, Vermont at Brightlook Hospital to Arthur and Helen McLaren on

October 30, 1937. She spent the first three years of her life in Barnet,

Vermont, and she maintained a lifelong

connection to the Northeast Kingdom. She spent her formative years in

Belmont

Massachusetts, where she graduated class valedictorian from Belmont High

School in 1955.

Jean attended Tufts University (Jackson College) and graduated with a degree in English in

1959. After graduation, she taught English at Acton High School. Around that

time, she went

out on three dates with Melvin Low, a friend of her older brother, George.

There was a

misunderstanding of Austenian proportions after the first date — they didn't see one another

again until three years later. Fortunately, they were engaged after the third

date. While this level

of haste in courtship is generally not recommended, the marriage was a

successful one. They

leave behind two children: David and his wife Valerie, who live in Leominster, Mass, and Alison, who lives in Danville, Vermont. Ross, their grandson, lives in Somerville, Mass.

Jean and Mel became a single identity, a unification of “we-ness” that lasted for 65 years. She was his tactician and wingman, and in the final six years of his life, his caregiver and advocate. He loved their home on Washington Road in Rye, and he wanted to remain there. She made it possible through love, perseverance, and plenty of laughter. Losing Mel last year was devastating for her. The thing she missed the most was laughing with him.

Jean had a love of reading and language, with a special fondness for Shakespeare. In the mid-1970s she returned to teaching English full-time at Portsmouth Junior High. It was a career she loved until she retired in the 1990s. In their retirement, Jean and Mel spent their time between Rye and Barnet, always traveling with a carload of pets. Jean supported Mel in his market gardening enterprises, as well as his role in local politics. She was his speechwriter, and rest assured that any formal communication from Mel was thoroughly proofread for grammar and clarity.

For a self-described introvert, she had a surprising number of friends from all ages and walks

of life. She loved meaningful conversation, and anyone who visited her could count on that, as well as some really nice artisanal soft-rinded cheese and decent wine. What drew them to her was empathy — a virtue that's become complicated of late, but not to her. She felt deeply for others, and that sentiment was returned many times over, especially in her year of grief after Mel passed.

Jean's empathy was intertwined with a prevailing sense of justice. She wasn't afraid to stand up to authority, or, when a certain situation called for it, to outrun it really fast, into the woods. Never underestimate an introvert.

She was intensely allergic to gluten as well as formalities. At her insistence, there will be no funeral. (Really, she said she'd kill us if we had one.) Nevertheless, the people who loved her need closure. There will be a celebration of her life at her home on Saturday, May 30th, at 1:00. Please join us to celebrate her long and happy life.

We request no flowers. Those who wish to honor Jean's legacy can choose between two organizations representing her enduring Vermont and New Hampshire ties: Kingdom Animal Shelter in St. Johnsbury, VT, or the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund in Concord, NH. There will be a private burial.

Tribute Wall

PC

“ I agree with you, Kevin. Mel and Jean, through their care, kindness, and compassion, set an example to live up to. Rye is a better place because of them. Peter

Peter Cady - May 07 at 09:37 AM

KW

“ When Mel was at Webster at Rye, I visited him. It was on a cold, cloudy day. Mother nature, as if she knew, changed the weather for a few hours. The sun came out, it was warm and sunny. Mel told me plainly he needed to get the "hell" out of there. So, we did. We walked outside and sat together in that unexpected sunshine.

Jean arrived a short time later. The two of them fell into stories about Rye families, children growing up, the neighborhood they both loved. I sat and listened, learning things about people in Rye I never knew, some wonderful, some funny. It was fun to have that opportunity.

Jean, you are strong like my mother. Over the years your words and institutional knowledge behind them changed decisions I was about to make. The way you spoke about people taught me everything about what it means to serve people. Even retired you still taught life lessons. You were right. You made me a better community leader.

Thank you Kevin

Kevin Walsh - May 02 at 04:35 PM