

Kirsten McEdward, 80, of Middlebury

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KIRSTEN MCEDWARD

MIDDLEBURY — Kirsten McEdward passed away peacefully in her home in Middlebury, Vt., on Tuesday, Dec. 3, surrounded by her family. She was 80 years old. Kirsten was born in Sonder Omme, Denmark, on Aug 9, 1939. Sonder Omme is a beautiful little Danish town in Jutland, not far from the North Sea.

In October of 1960, Kirsten was living in Copenhagen completing a four-year pharmacy degree. On the day before her final exam, Kirsten took a stroll to the beautiful Gefion Fountain in Copenhagen, where she encountered a handsome pilot and decorated American war hero named Mac. Kirsten was just 21 years old. Mac, 18 years her senior, was visiting Copenhagen from Beirut, Lebanon, where he was based as a pilot.

After a brief acquaintance and three weeks of telegram communication, Mac sent Kirsten a round-trip ticket to visit him in Beirut. Ten days later they were married there. They spent their first year living together in Heliopolis, Egypt, while Mac was on assignment. In the summer of 1961, Kirsten moved back to Thisted, Denmark, to live with her family and welcome their first baby, Jackie, in August 1962. In the fall of that year, Kirsten and Mac moved to Chipman Park, in Middlebury, Vt. This would be their home for the rest of their lives.

Mac introduced Kirsten to tennis in Egypt, a game that would become Kirsten's lifetime passion. Playing a lot of tennis in Middlebury with her young daughters, Kirsten wanted more young people and adults in Middlebury to enjoy the sport. Kirsten started a tennis program for the Middlebury Recreation Department, where she taught for 12 years. Later Kirsten helped organize local summer tennis tournaments that drew players from around the state, winning many tournaments herself in both singles and doubles.

Kirsten joined the Vermont Board of Tennis for USTA and later became the Vermont Program Coordinator for USTA running five to six grand prix tennis tournaments around the state. She also ran the very successful USTA Grassroots Tennis Camp for 23 years; a tuition-free tennis camp for young high school students who showed promise in the sport.

She was so grateful to all the tennis coaches who volunteered their time to the camp year after year to help young people learn the game.

In the mid-80s, Kirsten stepped up to fill a vacant coaching position for the Middlebury Tigers boys' high school tennis team, which she then held for 10 years. Annoyed by the fact that she had to bring their tennis racquets to Burlington to be strung, she seized on the opportunity to teach herself how to string rackets, and in short order became a certified racquet technician. For the next 30 years Kirsten, strung rackets out of her home office for many players. Her racquet stringing expertise was just one of many skills she brought to her longtime service and employment at the Forth N' Goal sports shop in Middlebury.

When Middlebury Indoor Tennis (MIT) was built, she was thrilled. Kirsten worked part-time at MIT organizing round-robin tournaments, coordinating court time, networking partners for out-of-town visitors, and hosting numerous festive tennis socials. Kirsten loved competing herself and enjoyed playing with her USTA 4.0 League Team that twice won the Vermont State League Championships.

Year round, Kirsten loved to coordinate fun outdoor activities for young people and families. When her girls were in middle school, Kirsten founded the Elephant Mountain Girl Scout Camp with over 120 girls. Kirsten also started the Nordic ski event, the Breadloaf Citizens Race, which was initially called "Just for the Fun of It." For 17 years she would recruit Henry Palmer to tow his old cannon up to Rikert Ski Center to start the race. For the winners, she baked two enormous loaves of bread that barely fit in the oven. Kirsten traveled to many places close to home and abroad with her husband Mac, her daughters and with her sister Birte. Whether it was flying at treetop level over the Amazon River in a DC-3 with Mac or biking the dirt roads in Shoreham during the spring time when the apple blossoms were in full bloom, she loved it all.

Perhaps it was her own personal experience that led her to always be interested in connecting with young people of other countries. For five summers she was a coordinator for the Education First (EF) Program, finding family homes in and around Middlebury for 40 international students to come and live for two weeks and experience the wonderful Vermont life. It was not uncommon for the McEdwards to have an international student at the dinner table throughout the year.

Kirsten was artistic and industrious. Patterns and recipes were mainly for reference. She upholstered her own furniture, designed and made her daughter's wedding dresses, baked enough cinnamon rolls for a whole community, made lamps from scraps, designed and made many colorful sweaters, jackets, hats and quilts, and cooked gourmet meals from leftovers. Kirsten loved to create beautiful things with a Scandinavian flare and share

them with her family and friends. She was a tremendous cook, clever seamstress, fast knitter, and accomplished photographer.

Kirsten loved spending time at the family cabin, Eagles Nest, in Ripton. Year round she and Mac hosted family and friends at their special mountaintop retreat. Whether their guests were guided there by moonlight on skis in frigid temperatures or rode in the back of Mac's big red pick-up truck on a hot day, you could rely on Kirsten and Mac to have some homemade food to share, a cozy candle lit on the table, along with a good story of the day's adventure and a hearty laugh to follow. The pleasure of their positive spirit, ambitious work ethic, and wholesome humor will be sorely missed by many, especially their children and their families.

Kirsten wanted all of her friends to know how much she appreciated their friendships over the years. From tennis matches, bike rides, knitting clubs and smorgasbords on the back deck, she will forever be grateful for the fond memories and good laughs. She was especially grateful for the Chipman Park community through the years and the wonderful neighbors and children who brought her so much joy. She was particularly indebted to Sue and John Murphy who provided endless support during Mac's illness and did so much to make it possible for her to remain in her home until she passed away.

Kirsten is survived by her two daughters; Jackie McEdward Morse of Snowmass Village, Colo., and Pennie McEdward Rand of Richmond, Vt., their spouses Cullen Morse and Matthew Rand; and their three granddaughters, Brianna Morse Perkins of Chantilly, Va., Annavitte Rand of Portland, Maine, and Karin Rand of Richmond, Vt.

Kirsten is predeceased by her husband Foster "Mac" McEdward, her brother Hans Laue and sister Birte Mania.

There will be a celebration of Kirsten's life in the spring when the apple blossoms are blooming. If you are interested in attending the service, send a note to Kirsten's daughter Pennie and she will be sure to let you know the date. Pennie Rand, PO Box 545, Richmond, VT 05477

Donations can be forwarded to Addison County Home Health and Hospice. In lieu of donations, simply enjoy an extra candle lit in her honor at your cozy dinner table one evening.◇