

**MOUNT KISCO** - Patricia Hartford Keesee died peacefully at her home in Mount Kisco, New York this past Sunday evening February 24th where she had been in hospice care for the past two months. She was surrounded by her family, and in the weeks before her passing received visits, calls, letters and messages from a multitude of friends, family and admirers.



Born in Nashville, Tennessee on April 29th, 1928, she moved with her parents, William Donald Hartford and Carolyn Gwyn Hartford, and two sisters, Carolyn Vaughn, and Anne Zirkle, to Amherst, New York, a suburb of Buffalo where she attended high school. Upon graduation she was accepted at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts where she studied physics and English, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950. After Radcliffe, she moved to New York City where she worked for three years as a laboratory assistant at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research (now Rockefeller University) doing DNA research long before DNA was a household word.

In 1953, she married Thomas W. Keesee Jr, a native of Helena, Arkansas and a graduate of Duke University and Harvard Law School, who was working as a lawyer for Bessemer Securities. The couple moved to Mount Kisco in 1958 into a house on Sarles Street where she lived ever since, the last 19 years on her own after her husband's death in January 2000.

Patricia, also known as Pat or Patty, was an ardent conservationist, and after raising two children, she returned to school at SUNY Purchase from which she received another Bachelor of Arts degree in 1977, this one in Environmental Sciences. She subsequently devoted herself to both local and national organizations focused on preserving our environment and, deservedly, was the recipient of numerous awards for her outstanding contributions for her *conservation work from every organization in which she participated*. She had a particular interest in wetlands, wild flowers, and native plants, which she attributed to having spent much of her early childhood roaming the woods and hills along the Cumberland River in Tennessee collecting armfuls of wild flowers to sell to her mother's friends for 5 cents a bunch. This early devotion to botany and the world of nature led her to become engaged with a variety of organizations including The Nature Conservancy, where she served as a Trustee and Vice Chairman of the Lower Hudson Chapter and the New

York State Board, the Rusticus Garden Club, where she served as President, the Town of Bedford Conservation Board and Wetlands Commission, the Westchester County Environmental Management Council and Federated Conservationists of Westchester of which she was President, the Garden Club of America where she was a Board member, the Council of the New York Botanical Garden, the New York Academy of Sciences, the Native Plant Center at Westchester Community College on whose Steering Committee she served and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, of which she was a Board member.

In her spare time, Patricia tended her garden at her home in Mount Kisco, where she planted a variety of wild flowers and native plants. In the summers, she would spend the month of July in the Adirondacks at the Ausable Club in St. Hubert's, near Keene Valley. There she entertained both family and friends who would visit her and stay in the cottage that she rented each year, Deer Camp, on the edge of the first fairway with a view of Noonmark Mountain from the front porch. She was an avid outdoors person, having climbed several of the High Peaks and then later taking long walks up the Lake Road. When not engaged in outdoor activities, she was a voracious reader and a devoted fan of the New York Times crossword puzzles. She travelled extensively throughout her life not only to Europe, including the former Soviet Union, but also to Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, Latin America and even Antarctica. She met a variety of fascinating people in her life and travels and was well versed and conversant on a wide spectrum of topics.

She was a faithful and engaged parishioner of Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church in Bedford, NY for 60 years. Most of all she will be remembered as a woman of great intelligence, a calm unflappable demeanor, a warm and caring nature, a gentle sense of humor and a remarkable grace.

She is survived by her son, Thomas W. Keesee III, her daughter, Anne Keesee Niemann, her step-son, Allen P. K. Keesee, her daughter-in-law, Angela Mello Keesee, son-in-law, Thomas Niemann, and her six grandchildren, Andrew and William Keesee, and Carolyn (Broadbin), Meg, Patricia and Charlotte Niemann. A service will be held for her at Saint Matthew's Church, 382 Cantitoe Rd, Bedford, New York on Monday, March 4th at 11am. A reception will follow in the Parish House. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent in her honor to: The Native Plant Center 75 Grasslands Road, Valhalla, NY 10595 or The Community Center of Northern Westchester Attn: Clare Murray, 84 Bedford Road, Katonah, NY 10536.