



Francine Winifred Dunn Bearden

October 29, 1929 – June 9, 2024

Francine Winifred Dunn was born on October 29, 1929 to Francis Dunn Jr. and Antoinette Nunes Dunn in Oakland, CA. She liked to tell anyone who asked her birth date that she was born on the day the stock market crashed, the start of the Great Depression. She was also proud being a fourth generation Californian. During her growing up years many fond memories were made camping with cousins, aunts and uncles in Yosemite and at Big Sur.

After graduating from Castlemont High School in Oakland, CA, Francine attended UC Berkeley majoring in Decorative Arts and Art History. During that time, she most enjoyed studying with well-known artist Chiura Obata and hearing architecture speaker Frank Lloyd Wright. At Cal she was socially active, joining the Masonic Club. She dated several young men but one rose to the top. Bruce Bearden was a fellow Oakland native studying pomology and entomology. The two were joined in marriage following graduation in 1951.

In 1953 Bruce went to Korea with the Marine Corps. Francine had the opportunity to work at the State Capitol where her father was an assemblyman representing the greater Oakland/Alameda area. She was among the team of women who recorded the daily actions of the legislature. In off hours it was exhilarating to dine at the watering holes of politicians and frequent movie houses. Then in 1954 Bruce accepted a position in Mendocino County as a UC Extension Farm Advisor and by 1956 they moved into the new home they had built. Daughters Nancy and Susan followed soon after, ending Francine's time as a first grade teacher in Redwood Valley.

Francine gave her time to PTA, 4H and Camp Fire Girls and was president of AAUW. As her daughters grew older Francine was able to pursue artistic interests in watercolor painting, pen and ink drawing and linoleum block printing. She designed labels for local wineries and created a line of note cards called Mendo-Scenes sold around the county. Her daughters also recall dipping candles in the backyard, attending a raku firing of pottery by the Russian River and that for several summers she applied her creative writing skills at the Ukiah Daily Journal when the Women's Page editor went on vacation. Francine and her sister Jacqueline had sewn their own stylish outfits since high school and Francine continued to sew for herself and her girls. She even learned upholstery, skillfully covering couches and chairs in the avocado green and harvest gold of the day.

Francine enjoyed community involvement and made significant contributions to AAUW, Mendocino County Art Association, and the Ukiah Community Concert Association. She served on the newly created Ukiah Arts Commission during the development of the Grace Hudson Museum and Home. In later years Bruce and Francine enjoyed extensive travel and puttering at the vacation home they bought near Fort Bragg. Their 50th wedding anniversary in 2001 was celebrated with a great party. Bruce passed away two years later. Francine rallied from great loss and eventually travelled independently to many countries including China, Africa, and Iran.

With help from her daughters, she stayed in her home enjoying her book group and following politics. She continued to be an example to her descendants until the day she died.

Francine is survived by her daughters Nan Bearden Frenkel and Susan Bearden Gates; sons-in-law Steven Frenkel and Ray Gates; and grandchildren Johanna Jepson, Andrea Paul, Evan Frenkel, Clare Dunn, John Thomas and William Thomas; as well as four great grandchildren, Savigne & Frances Jepson, Ari Paul and Ruby Thomas.

A celebration of life is planned for Saturday, August 10 from 12 – 2 pm. Call Nan at 707-462-1818 for details.

Donations in her memory may be made to the Grace Hudson Museum & Sun House or Ukiah Community Concert Association.