

## SCHNELL, JANE MILNER



On February 24, 2018, in the early morning, the amazing Jane pedaled off into the sunset on her final journey home. She is survived by us, the extended family, "adopted" family, and friends from near, far and all around the world whose lives she touched so specially. Jane's worldly adventure began when her beloved parents, Ruth McCullough and John Hoyle Schnell, welcomed her on July 20, 1930, in Columbus, Georgia, as their only child. She attended schools in Columbus and Atlanta, Georgia, Columbus, Ohio, Berlin, Germany, and Switzerland. Following in her mother's footsteps, Jane graduated from Randolph-Macon Women's College in Lynchburg, Virginia in 1952, where she established and endowed the OM Scholarship Fund, also known as The Old Maid Scholarship Fund, honoring the memory of "THE OLD MAID," the first

humor magazine published by a women's college in the United States, and her mother, Ruth, who was largely influential in starting the magazine in the 1920s. Preference for the scholarship is given to women from Eastern Europe.

Following in her father's footsteps, Jane went on to work for the CIA for 30 years, a career that took her to exciting locations around the world, such as Singapore, Tibet and Switzerland. She spent her vacations skiing, sailing and hiking. For several years, she was an accomplished small boat racer. At age 55, Jane traded her desk chair at the CIA for the saddle of a touring bicycle. She planned a trip as "one year of freedom from scheduled, regulations or responsibility- one year to do anything I chose. I wanted to see what this country looked like felt like, smelled like. Freedom was a privilege, a 'gold watch' I gave myself, a retirement present from me." 12,000 miles, 31 states and 13 months later, she had cycled around the USA, literally- and then some. At age 57, she was the oldest and only woman known to have completed a USA perimeter bicycle trip, and she was the oldest person and only woman to complete the 1989 North-South Pedal for Power, sponsored by the League of American Wheelman. Jane tells her amazing story of personal triumph, a retirement adventure by a woman on her own, in her first book, "Changing Gears: Bicycling America's Perimeter." She went on to write and publish four more books about the bike rides in Georgia, Europe, and her experiences on a handicapped cycling tour of Siberia and Mongolia, as well as a memoir of her younger years.

In 1972, in the little mountain kingdom of Nepal, Jane, a renowned and award-winning photographer, found and fell in love with Tibetan rugs during a 12-mile trek through the Himalayas. She soon became an internationally-known Tibetan rug expert and dealer, as well as co-founding the Tibetan Rug Association newsletter. Jane was very influential in realizing her dream of the Tibetan world's first major exhibition of hand-knotted rugs, "Temple, Household, Horseback: Rugs of the Tibetan Plateau" at the Textile Museum in

Washington, D.C., where four rugs in the exhibit were loaned from her personal collection. Heading back to Georgia to care for her mother, Jane settled with her in Clayton. There, she became an innkeeper when she purchased, restored and renovated The Hillcrest Inn built in 1907, as a private family retreat- now known as The Parker Ranch by the new owners. During her time in Clayton, Jane became a master in the art of quilting, raised Highland cows, and fell in love with the north Georgia mountains. In November 2015, Jane and her beloved dog, Sox, moved to The Hermitage in Richmond, Virginia, where she renewed and continued her passion for oil painting. In true Jane style, she brought joy and wonder to all she encountered there. Jane was very involved with the Central Asian Institute, Randolph College Alumni Association, Rails-to-Trails, the East Coast Greenway, the American Discovery Trail Society and Meals on Wheels. In lieu of flowers, please contribute to any of the above or to the OM Scholarship Fund at Randolph College, 2500 Rivermont Avenue, Lynchburg, Virginia 24503, or contribute to the barn raising at The Parker Ranch, 95 Parker Lane, Clayton, Georgia 30525 or online at [www.indiegogo.com/projects/barn-raising-atthe-parker-ranch-community-education#](http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/barn-raising-atthe-parker-ranch-community-education#/) in Jane's memory. The Barn, a gathering place for the community, seminars and celebrations will be dedicated to Jane upon completion. We will honor Jane with a celebration of her life where she will join her mother at The Parker Ranch in Clayton, Georgia, on a date to be determined.

Please view Jane's books by clicking [HERE](#).