

JANE BROWNE PETERSEN

1903–2003





*For all of those
whose lives Jane touched,
whose hearts shined in her presence,
whose spirits she inspired, and
whose dreams she helped
make come true.*





FOREWORD

SHORTLY AFTER JANE'S DEATH, I thought about the course of her life which, geographically, had three centers: Los Angeles, New York and Chicago. In each, she built a structure of friendships with roots in her academic life, her profession and her activities within the community. She was also fully committed to family bases in Los Angeles as well as in Chicago.

During the last days of her life, by visits, telephone calls and letters, friend after friend expressed his or her admiration of Jane based on her kindness, her integrity, the faith in people she always demonstrated, the guidance and help she had offered, and, where applicable, her professionalism.

I thought it would be a lasting memorial to Jane if I asked a few of her friends who could provide an outlook on portions of her life as well as her professional activity, to set down their thoughts on their participation in her life and their relationship to it. Their comments follow.

WILLIAM O. PETERSEN
APRIL, 2003

Kilbee Brittain

THIS IS LIKE A FAMILY GATHERING, all of us friends who came together to think about Jane. Some have known her since childhood. And that's a very long time—long enough to have books written about similar time spans, like “The Age of Elizabeth.” This would be our Age of Jane.

Some of us here went to our first big parties at the Brownes' Christmas galas, with Jane and her indomitable mother being sure all the girls had escorts and all the boys remembered to bring gardenia corsages. Jane's brothers taught us to dance at those parties with much more gaiety than we had learned dancing at cotillions. Some of us went to high school with Jane before she defected to the East; but then she returned, to teach, to start her business, and to become again a continuing part of our lives.

We always marveled at her vitality, her energy—a family trait, we saw—and her intellectual acuity that made us enjoy sometimes combative but always interesting conversations with her. Whether or not we agreed with all the firm beliefs of the Browne canon—and that's “canon”

with one “n”—Jane was always intrigued with and open to others’ ideas, whether they were skeptics, agnostics, or an occasional Malibu mystic.

Jane’s friends were so pleased when she and Bill decided to marry (and that doesn’t seem as long ago as 1978, and in this very church). We were pleased not only for them, but also for us—what a good marriage to a marvelous man with his beatific smile!

I recall a toast to Jane at a dinner she and Bill gave at Lake Geneva, “To Jane, like Batman, swooping in and out of the dark canyons of literary Gotham City.” And they were dark. It’s a tough business, editing and marketing books, made more difficult for Jane in that, working with writers she knew personally, she had to handle their creations and their fragile egos in a kind yet practical way.

In the midst of such busyness, Jane was loyal and helpful to friends and family of all generations. What’s not to love about someone so enchanted by the whole world, including hedgehogs? Or who asks a friend calling her at the hospital shortly before her death, “How is your family?” How astounding, that someone so ill would ask that question first, surely an example of Christian charity. Earlier that day, Jane had taken off her respirator to phone her

office about a business crisis; later, she told a friend, “And I’ve called the priest.”

What a personality! Jane and I had discussed Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* at length ages ago, and I thought now about the people at her famous party, wondering exactly what it was that made the protagonist so compelling? The ending sentence has a friend deciding, and I’ll just change the name here, “It was Jane. For there she was.”

The other day I read a review of a book about the tribulations and triumphs of 17th Century England. I wish Jane were here to discuss it with me. The review ends, “The reader is left feeling hopeful, consoled, and inspired.”

On this first day of Spring, and in these troubled days of war and violence and destruction, Jane would want us to leave this memorial mass with the same feeling: “Hopeful, consoled, and inspired.”

Thank you, Jane, for bringing us together once again.



Melinda Corey

I WAS JANE JORDAN BROWNE'S ASSISTANT for 19 months in 1980 and 1981. During that time, Jane taught me about good, evil, and publishing, and encouraged me to return to my life after a family death. Later, she helped me land a publishing job in New York, sold a book for me, and was also in my wedding. Aside from my husband, she was the only publishing person I ever loved. But while we were in the same office at MPD, Inc., there was often a test of wills. She always won, as the following portrait explains.

In late 1979, when I interviewed for my first job in publishing—Assistant to the President of Multimedia Product Development, Inc.—Jane liked that I was early for my appointment. “You should be early for your appointment with someone,” she said. “It shows that you’re interested. You are interested?” Yes, I said. The room was a mess: manuscripts rising from the floor like trees, Jane’s coat over my prospective desk, coffee grounds on the counter. “There will be a lot of typing and editing,” Jane went on. “But the most important job you’ll have here is

answering the phone. The deals are made on the phone—you seem quiet, can you speak?” Yes, I have done it for most of my life, I said. What was that in her hair? A paper clip? “I see you went to the University of Chicago. Were you on scholarship?” Some, I said. “I had a scholarship to Smith, Meg Greenfield was in my class. What is your I.Q.?” I told her. “Good,” she said, “Mine is two points higher.” We’re gifted, I said. “The job starts on Monday, at nine sharp. I’ll see you then, and you don’t have to get so dressed up.” I would get as dressed up as I wanted, I thought as I thanked her.

For the next two years, I was diligent, tidy, and prided myself on taking only 20 minutes for lunch at my desk. For her part, Jane demonstrated how she was, as one publisher put it, “the hardest-working agent in the business.” She never left her desk, or hung up her phone, or ate lunch, or went to the bathroom. To Jane, every project was not only a sale, but a mission. It was Larry’s book, or Francine’s, or Axel’s—and each was a charge she had to protect from “those terrible contract departments” and “those horrible publishers.” This was her moral purpose, and it was a great one.

But she was still Jane, the fearless handler of six-figure book auctions who lost her keys on her desk. I could not change her. But I could try to change her surroundings to

make them fit my idea of orderliness. One day, without Jane's knowing, I moved the clock ahead five minutes, so I could catch an earlier train, but more importantly, to make the place run on Melinda Time, not Jane Time. It took only one day for Jane to notice, change the clock back, and start wearing a watch of her own.

For me, Jane will always sit at her Selectric, drinking instant coffee and saving authors.



Axel Madsen

THE AUTHOR OF TWENTY-TWO published books, I owe much of my career to Jane Jordan Browne. The first of Jane's many qualities for me, and I am sure for many, many of her clients, was her persistence. Too many agents are post offices. The author sends in his or her book proposal, the agent adds a cover letter and sends the package to two or three editors who may have an affinity for the project. When the rejection letters come back, the agent forwards them to the author. End of story.

However much I researched a subject and, over the years, learned to write proposals, none of them met with Jane's approval the first time around. Jane was always busy and read proposals and manuscripts whenever she had minutes to spare and no matter where she was—in bed, on a city bus, or on an airplane, flying to a conference. Invariably, the proposal would come back with corrections and suggestions for improvement. Clarity and a table of contents were what she demanded. Humbled once more, I would correct and amend the document and send her the

revised proposal, sometimes to see it come back a second time for more of the same. But when Jane was satisfied, she set to work selling it. Out it went. Back came the rejections, and out again it went to other editors. Because of her belief in her authors, Jane almost always found a “home” for our books.

Anybody who knew Jane also knew that selling a book and scrutinizing the fine print in the publisher’s contract were not the end of her labors. A year after I’d finish a manuscript and was panting for the second half of the publisher’s advance, I learned to show the manuscript to Jane first. It would come back with colored tabs sticking out and notes in her inimitable scrawl that we all learned to decipher. My editors never knew; they just thought I was a seasoned writer.

The first book Jane sold for me was a biography of William Wyler. Yes, I was her client for thirty years. Being directed by Wyler in *Ben Hur*, Charlton Heston said was like, “getting the works in a Turkish bath. You darn near drown, but you come out smelling like a rose” (p. 351). Being represented by Jane meant a workout too, but in the end, you too smelled like a rose.

I thanked her. I’m sure we all did. Bill and Jane were our friends. They stayed with us in Bucks County, Pennsylvania and in Los Angeles, as my wife and I stayed at

their Lake Shore Drive apartment and at Black Point. I’m a little ashamed to realize that I took her affection and her labor for granted. Much of my work would never have seen print had it not been for her. I will miss her.



Mary Kane Blair Hayes

ONE LATE AFTERNOON in September 1962, I returned to my New York apartment and found in the entryway a friend I had not seen in 10 years. Recognition however, was immediate, “Hello, Jane Browne!”

Jane and I first met 16 years earlier, in September 1946, when Jane arrived at the Ethel Walker School as a junior. The school, located in the rolling hills of Connecticut about 15 miles east of Hartford, was a top all-girls preparatory school. The 45 members of the junior class were quartered on the top floor of the Beaverbrook dormitory. Jane roomed down the hall from me with another new girl, Joan Pressprich (Metcalf). The two of them were an irrepressible pair and managed to find much fun in our happy but regimented lives. The academic schedule was rigorous with emphasis upon literature and writing skills. We read Shakespeare, Austen, Scott, Hardy, Gallworthy, Tolstoy, the Romantic poets, and Milton. The once-a-week papers on an assigned subject kept us busy on the weekends and few off-campus excursions were allowed. Once in a while, vis-

iting parents would take us to the movies in Hartford and then to the Howard Johnson’s for ice cream. Our days were filled with classes in the mornings; sports in the afternoon; study hall in the evening; and lights out at 9:30 P.M. We never went hungry—breakfast, lunch, and dinner were obligatory sit-down formal events, plus milk and cookies were served three times a day. No wonder some of us gained weight!

Overall, junior year was one of intense study. Jane and I had different teachers and schedules, but we did end up together one afternoon, the two of us all alone, taking a lengthy vocabulary and reading test. No explanation was given. Since we were both good students, we in our youthful bravado took this exercise as a compliment to our proficiency in “English.” The less complimentary thought, that this event was an effort to boost our SAT scores, never crossed our minds.

Jane and I shared another bond. There were few Roman Catholics at Ethel Walker and as such, we rose early on Sunday mornings and took Mr. Pringle’s taxi to Mass. No Sunday morning sleep-ins for us.

After one year at Walker’s, Jane went to New York City for her senior year and graduated from Miss Hewitt’s Classes. Years later, after I had become the Chairman of the History department at that very school, Mrs. Gibson, the

science teacher, told me that Jane Browne was the best physics student she ever taught.

Fourteen Ethel Walker students entered Smith College in the fall of 1948, and so Jane found many old friends on campus. I roomed with Joan, Jane's roommate from Ethel Walker. Jane's brother Harry would often drive up from New Haven, where he was attending Yale, to take out Joan so my path crossed Jane's quite a bit freshman year.

All three of us took advantage of the opportunity to study away from Northampton our junior year: Jane to Pomona College in her beloved California, Joan to Italy, and I left for Switzerland. Upon her return to Smith, Jane moved to Talbot House. Ethel Walker friends Suzette Spitzer (King) and Arden Bondy (Murray) roomed there along with Meg Greenfield who later became the *Washington Post's* leading editorial writer. Jane was a distinguished student at the college, majoring in literature and writing and at the time of her graduation was awarded the Alpha Award for Creative Writing. The prior fall Jane had been elected to the Alpha Society along with Sylvia Plath and Meg Greenfield, distinguished company indeed.

From 1952 to 1962, Jane and I did not see each other, but, upon her arrival in New York City, she became my roommate in a charming old brownstone on the Upper

East Side where we inhabited the two bedroom top floor apartment. Four flights of stairs meant nothing to us in those days. Jane went to work for T.Y. Crowell, a publishing house in the Chelsea district. Jane paid visits to my family's home in Fairfield, CT and our beach house in Madison. She became good friends of my sisters, Kathleen and Rosanne. In the country, there were afternoons of swimming and tennis and evenings of bridge and charades.

In 1963, on one of these visits to Connecticut, Jane and I attended a performance at the Stratford Shakespearean Theater. I introduced Jane to my friend Carol Thompson as we picnicked on the lawn by the Housatonic River. It was the start of a long-lasting friendship filled with much fun and many adventures.

Jane's and my domestic arrangement was not to last. The brownstone we shared was sold and vacated and we were forced to pack up. Jane to move to the Village to room with Alice Mayhew, a friend from Simon and Schuster. Jane, always enormously generous, had my dining room chairs re-caned as a parting gift.

Jane moved back to Los Angeles in 1967, and, by 1971, with the establishment of her literary agency, her trips to New York became more frequent. Often she would stay with Carol or me. We had apartments in the same building, but on different floors. Friends would always gather when

Jane came and on one hot and happy July evening, we celebrated Jane's arrival and Wally Brown's birthday, a festive Browne and Brown event.

Jane, the most considerate of guests, would always bestow lovely gifts upon her hostess, always appropriate, always useful. One Christmas, we were flabbergasted by the arrival of a portable dishwasher to be shared by Carol on the 11th floor and me on the 10th. What a sumptuous gift!

In the summer of 1976, Jane and I were issued a most exciting invitation—to visit Carol, who would soon become Mrs. Patrick Hemingway, in Montana. We would be pioneers in her one room log cabin in the Gallatin Valley. Two weeks without electricity or indoor plumbing. We fished with worms after dismally failing to catch crickets, cooked over a wood stove and bathed outdoors under the trees. Jane had some experience in fishing gained from youthful summers spent on Lake Tahoe; she not only caught fish but expertly filleted them.

Those weeks in Montana were filled with adventures: exploring the vastness and beauties of Yellowstone Park; floating in a rubber raft on the Madison River and losing our way in its many rivulets; and, unwittingly walking through muddy fields which we later learned were rattlesnake breeding grounds. Carol was our leader and hero-

ine. On two different occasions she had to drive each of her guests the 40 miles to the Bozeman Hospital, fortunately for minor problems. Despite the mishaps, the three of us had the best of times.

By 1977, Bill Petersen had entered Jane's life in an important way. This was evident by his decision to accompany Jane to our 25-year Smith College Reunion. Bill flew to New York and rented a car. Before picking us up, he stocked a picnic basket with pâté, imported cheeses, French bread and wine. Off we went, taking the back roads to Northampton, feasting on the way. At the reunion, I chaired a symposium on working women and Jane was one of the speakers, talking about her work as a literary agent.

In the spring of 1978, Jane and Bill once again visited New York City. I held a dinner party for Bill's friends at my apartment and Bill, in turn, took a group of our friends to La Mangeoire for a glamorous evening. Later that summer, Jane visited Bill's beautiful home, Black Point, on the shores of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Bill proposed while they walked the lovely grounds. Jane and Bill were married in Los Angeles, Thanksgiving weekend 1978 and I was honored to serve as their bridesmaid.

Jane moved to Chicago and her visits to New York continued, as the book business brought her east. Bill would sometimes come, too.

At the end of 1985, the Petersens, the Hemingways, the Hayes and Peg MacLaren gathered at Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone National Park for a week of cross-country skiing, a brand new sport for most of us. We traveled to Old Faithful on a snow-cat (a decidedly cold and uncomfortable mode of travel), searched the star-studded skies for Halley's Comet, and toasted in the New Year at a gala dinner-dance. We even went swimming in pools fed by hot springs while snow flakes tumbled from the sky!

In the summer of 1989, Jane and Bill visited the Long Island home I shared with my husband Russ Hayes for a weekend of croquet and swimming in the Atlantic. Smith friends gathered to give them a big welcome: Barbara and Roland de Loës; Ruth and John Martin; Rita and Jack Nadler; Mary and Tom Cohn; and Joan and Warren Metcalf. Inveterate sightseers, the Petersens also visited old houses in Southampton.

Jane always enjoyed returning to Northampton for the "Class of 1952's" Smith College reunions. She would attend functions at the Library, her favorite campus institution, and would roam the gardens and the greenhouses, always interesting to knowledgeable horticulturists like Jane. Jane and I would often room together along with our friend Ruth Martin. At our 50th Reunion in May 2002, we were allotted the three best rooms on campus thanks to

the fact that Ruth was Flower Chairman, and her baskets and baskets of spring flowers required lots of space. That weekend, we dined on lobster, saw gads of old friends, and got soaked to the skin in downpours of rain. All in all, a happy and memorable event.

Many good thoughts leap to mind when one remembers Jane. She was energetic, focused and a hard worker. Her brains and competitive spirit brought her well-deserved success in business and the literary world. Her mind was sharp and quick. She enjoyed solving problems and was always helpful in providing good suggestions to those who requested assistance.

Jane was the very best of friends. As well as being loving, loyal, and generous, Jane was witty and fun. We will sorely miss her.



William O. Petersen

IN THE PRECEDING PAGES, Mary Kane Hayes commented upon Jane's year at the Ethel Walker School. She noted that Jane left at the end of the year and went on to graduate from Miss Hewitt's Classes in New York City. That was all part of a colorful story which was an important one in Jane's life. I am happy to share that story with you here.

Jane did not want to go to boarding school in the first place. She was very happy at the Marlborough School in Los Angeles. She had many friends there, maintained excellent grades and was involved in many student activities. However her mother thought an Eastern boarding school was the right thing as it had been for her when she attended the Spence School in New York City in the early 1920s.

The usual mother-daughter battle occurred with a slight retreat on Mrs. Browne's part: Jane could choose the school. So off they went to look at Eastern schools. Several had openings for someone with Jane's qualifications, but

they wouldn't do for Jane. Then they hit Ethel Walker. Jane approved of the school immediately when she ascertained there were no openings. Back they went to Los Angeles, Jane quietly triumphant at having foiled her mother.

Then came September. A telegram arrived from Walker stating there was an opening. Mrs. Browne told me that one could hear Jane's scream, "from Lake Arrowhead to Los Angeles." Ever reluctant, Jane went off dutifully and ended up having a very good year. She made friends who remain close to this day, did well in her work and considered her English teacher, Mrs. McJing, the greatest influence she ever had in developing her love of literature and writing.

As for the next year, her senior one, Jane was appointed to be an editor of the school literary magazine, made arrangements for roommates and overall, was looking forward to it. There was one problem: the headmistress, Mrs. Galbraith. Jane and she had tangled from the beginning. Jane violated no rules; she simply had no respect for Mrs. Galbraith and I suspect she was a bit insubordinate. The turning point was a meeting in New York where Jane's parents were visiting. Mrs. Galbraith called on them at their hotel and said Jane had been cruel to a certain student and

would not be invited to return the next year. At that point, Dr. Browne ordered Mrs. Galbraith from the suite, saying Jane might be difficult, but she was never cruel. That was that.

Jane couldn't go back to Marlborough in Los Angeles because it had a two-consecutive-year rule for graduating. The resolution was that Jane should live with her grandmother in Los Angeles and go to Los Angeles High. Jane didn't think this was at all bad because she adored her grandmother and it would be an escape from her own mother. However, this plan didn't last. Mrs. Browne called her former chaperone from the Spence School, Miss Hewitt, who had since founded her own school, Miss Hewitt's Classes. She asked, "Please take my daughter," and Miss Hewitt agreed. This time it was Jane who was foiled and in the fall she was on her way back East to boarding school.

Jane said that during the first day of classes at Miss Hewitt's, she was as awful as she could be. Her hair wasn't combed, she refused to wear stockings, and she glared fiercely at her instructors. At the end of the day, Miss Hewitt approached her and asked Jane to take a walk with her in Central Park. Jane said that walk transformed her life. Miss Hewitt was understandably inspirational and

encouraged Jane to give it a try, pointing out what New York had to offer someone with Jane's interests. Jane said she would try and never again caused a problem.

Jane had a fine time that year. Hewitt had liberal rules, one being that if your grades were high, you could go out any evening until curfew. Jane became good friends with Ed Sullivan's daughter, Betty, and accordingly, they had tickets for every play that opened in New York, and movies as well. And there was Saturday lunch every week at 21.

Jane was first in her class in every subject except French. There were many debutantes at school who had the advantage of French governesses; not exactly a Browne Los Angeles upbringing where the family did dishes after dinner.

When the Smith admissions director came by Hewitt's, she met Jane and they, "hit it off." Jane was accepted for early admission. And 50 years later, she was invited for the reunion of her class at Ethel Walker's. She attended and had a wonderful time.



E. C. Krupp

BOOKS LEAD PERILOUS LIVES. The frailties of authors, the migration of editors, the evaporation of publishers, the requirements of contracts, and the demands of deadlines, along with the complexities of production, promotion, distribution, customer demand, and shelf life, all introduce potentially fatal hazards to successful publication. Jane Jordan Browne understood those obstacles but never flinched from them. Her real clients were the books, and it was her mission to get them to their readers. She moved the world by leveraging the written word into print, a task that requires patience and endurance in an age of shortcuts and passing trends.

I, like so many others, have been in Jane's debt for decades. Our first interaction, in 1974, followed Jane's receipt of a Rector family Christmas card, spearheaded by my mother-in-law, Margaret, who knew Jane through the Los Angeles literary community. Jane must have read all that family news, for she called me in response to a description of an upcoming lecture series on ancient and prehis-

toric astronomy I was organizing for UCLA Extension. She thought that subject might be a good idea for a book. I had come to the same conclusion independently and imagined a collection of articles by the researchers I had invited to speak. Jane recognized the vulnerability of that format. She knew it would be harder to sell a collection of essays, but investing in an ethic that directly involved those who were then pioneering new studies, she took on the book I had in mind and guided it into a cohesive, unified package. When she sold it to Doubleday in August, 1975, my wife Robin and I were staying in Pont Orson, in France, near Mont-St-Michel, on another expedition to prehistoric standing stones. I remember vividly the proprietor of Relais Clemenceau bringing a letter from Jane to our table at dinner. She detailed Doubleday's offer and recommended acceptance. I was grateful to be in the hands of a professional, and Jane eventually placed seven other editions of the book, including British, German, Spanish, and Portuguese versions. In the foreword, I thanked, "Jane Jordan Browne, who courteously dogged this book to its end."

Jane sold my second book, but the manuscript took a wrong turn. The editor argued I was delivering a book different from the one that had been bought, and canceled the contract. Jane worked me through that crisis and financial

liability with honor and sold a new proposal to the same publisher. The editor for that new book changed, but Jane kept the book from getting lost and helped negotiate additional editorial help that ensured the book's success. Since 1983, it has gone through five different editions and is still in print. In the acknowledgments, I explained:

Jane Jordan Browne, of Multimedia Product Development, Inc., demonstrated her loyalty once again by making sure that no obstacle—even any I created—kept this book from making its way through the uncertain realm of publishing. Her sharp editorial eye examined the original proposal, the manuscript itself, and the revisions, and when she blinked, the cold beam of common sense and plain talk fell upon the words I had written. She is a vital partner in these efforts. There wouldn't be a book without her.

By the next book, Jane and I were already operating on mutual trust without conscious thought, and we no longer formalized our relationship with contracts. Her integrity made that possible. The third book moved into new territory with a fundamental approach, and I lost my perspective on its proper scope. I had again unnerved an editor, and this time Jane agreed to edit a massive manuscript that was twice as long as it was supposed to be. Somehow she absorbed this added workload, saved the book, and taught me more important details about writing. At the outset of that book, I informed readers:

Once again, I owe more than a contract percentage to my agent Jane Jordan Browne of Multimedia Product Development, Inc. Ever on the lookout for the inevitable slings and arrows that threaten safe passage from the author's Macintosh to the reader's armchair, she assists without intrusion and advises without pressure to protect all interests, especially the reader's. When this book was enough to anchor the Goodyear blimp, her take-no-prisoners approach to my bumper word crop helped bring the book back to the market. No manuscript should leave home without her.

Her salutary influence earned the book's dedication: "For Jane Jordan Browne, one of those celebrated agents of cosmic order." Three editions—one in Russian—were published.

Thanks to Jane, I had at last mastered the basics well enough to move the next book to publication without serious incident. Jane also engineered the paperback edition, a Japanese edition, and a Polish edition and also sold television options. In that book about power and the sky, I confirmed, ". . . the real power that propelled this book into publication resides in Jane's integrity . . . Jane always acts as the vigilant guardian of everyone's interest."

Anticipating the 1985–86 return of Halley's Comet, my wife and I collaborated on our first children's astronomy book. Because the art and text were fully conceived and somewhat unorthodox, the proposal was rejected by more

than a dozen publishers. Jane kept working the editors however, and sold the book in time to ensure its readiness for comet season. That unwanted book sold tens of thousands of copies and was seen and read by tens of thousands of children. Three more children's astronomy books followed, and all have stayed in print considerably longer than most releases. Jane also worked independently with Robin and placed three more unconventional books for kids. All of these reached publication and sold well. They extended Jane's reach on behalf of reading and writing, for their existence, along with the other four children's books, helped create and sustain nearly two decades of Robin's school and library visits. Through these activities, more than three hundred thousand kids have directly engaged the power of books and have become the beneficiaries of Jane's unseen impact.

In the last several years, the added demands of Griffith Observatory's capital renovation and expansion have consumed most of my discretionary time and prevented me from producing new books as frequently as I had in the past. Jane remained patient and encouraging, but her desire to get me back to writing more books prompted her to take direct and substantive action on behalf of the Observatory. She introduced me to one of her nieces, and that contact led to a major foundation grant for a project

that needs an astronomical amount of money. I was astounded by this unexpected influence of Jane Jordan Browne within the field of astronomy, but that didn't stop me from asking if she had any more nieces. She did, and in fact, another generous grant from another foundation was the result.

My alliance with Jane is one of the defining frames of my entire career. I am not only thankful for her professional service, but also for her friendship. When Jane married Bill Petersen, he and Jane both welcomed me every time I came to Chicago.

Jane shepherded each one of my books with relentless care and dispersed them throughout the world. She was stunningly effective and loyal, and I thrived on and liked her no-nonsense approach to writing and publishing. She would sometimes reveal a wicked sense of humor, and for me, it was a source of wicked pleasure. She was classy, capable, enduring and honest. As far as I'm concerned, she wrote the book on literary representation. Losing her won't close the book on our friendship or on my obligation to her standards.



Sandra Dallas

WHEN MY FIRST NOVEL, *Buster Midnight's Café*, was published in 1990, I called it a tale of murder. Not so, Jane told me. I'd written a story about loyalty and friendship, she said. Jane understood my writing better than I did. And she recognized those virtues, I suppose, because they were so much a part of who she was. Jane's gift of loyalty and friendship were critical in my becoming a published novelist—along with the fact that she never gave up on me. I'm not the only one of Jane's authors to say that.

Jane was my friend and mentor every bit as much as she was my agent. Not long after *Buster* came out, I lost my job of 25 years, nobody wanted *The Persian Pickle Club* (which had made the rounds of publishers for months), and Jane had just turned down a mystery I'd worked on for a year. When that manuscript came back (in one of Jane's recycled envelopes, of course), I wrote to her, asking if I should admit that *Buster* was a fluke and give up fiction to return to writing western history where I'd been more successful. Jane phoned me—you all know that back then, Jane rarely

spent money on telephone calls—and she said I had to keep on writing. “That's what you do,” she said matter-of-factly. Then she told me to write what came easiest, to write what I really wanted to write. I started on *The Diary of Mattie Spenser*, which became my favorite of my books.

Jane had an uncanny sense of what worked. She turned down the first attempt of *The Persian Pickle Club*, “because it has no plot,” she said. But later, she suggested that I try, “that quilt book” again because it did have a germ of an idea. (She was right about the first draft having no plot.) A couple of years ago, when I wanted to rewrite *The Chili Queen*, a novel I had worked on for 25 years or more, Jane, who'd already read two versions, told me, “What's wrong with that novel, Sandra, is that all the characters are unlikable.” In all those years, I hadn't figured that out. Jane's single sentence turned *The Chili Queen* into a publishable novel.

Jane was a superb agent, of course—supportive, tenacious, and hard-working. She was critical, too, and oh, didn't we all dread getting back manuscripts with hundreds—perhaps thousands—of Post-it notes pointing out inconsistencies and problems with story line, misspellings and grammatical errors! Jane had an encyclopedic knowledge and was rarely wrong. When she made a factual correction in a manuscript written by a friend of mine, the

author complained to me, “I researched this. I know I’m right. Do you think I can leave it?” “Are you nuts?” I replied. “Fudge it.” And she did.

Jane’s support—and her friendship—continued to the final days of her life. When I spoke to her in the hospital a little more than a week before she died, she said cheerfully, “I have your manuscript with me. I’m on page 120.” I will treasure those Post-it notes as her final gift to me.

If there are any misspellings or grammatical errors here, please don’t tell Jane.



I WORKED AS JANE’S ASSISTANT from 1981 to 1985. It was an unforgettable experience, and probably the happiest time of my life. When you worked for Jane, it was clear who was boss. However, you also worked as a team. We had tremendous camaraderie, and I came to feel like Jane was a member of my extended family. I loved her the way some people love their favorite aunt.

Jane had a personality that was larger than life. I have never known anyone who possessed equal vitality or zest for her work. One might feel many things while working for Jane, but boredom was never one of them.

Jane was intensely loyal to her clients. She was also fiercely honest. These two qualities made her an indefatigable negotiator. During the four years we worked together, Jane negotiated hundreds of contracts. She always did her best for her client, and never gave up on a point she thought her client deserved—no matter how long she had to spend on it, or how little she was getting paid for it. Jane was not someone who gave Class A service to a big client,

and Class C service to the little guy. If she was negotiating an author's contract, she gave it her best, whether it was for a \$5,000 book or a \$500,000 book. This trait probably meant that she was less successful as a businesswoman than she would otherwise have been. However, it certainly made her an inspiration to me, as a professional and as a person.

Jane's work with Helen Hooven Santmyer and the Ohio State University Press exemplified this. It was during my time with Jane that she was approached by two men from Ohio State, who were looking for assistance in negotiating a subsidiary rights contract for one of their books, *And Ladies of the Club*. Jane agreed to take on the project for what I believe was a \$75 flat-rate consulting fee.

Ohio State had published *And Ladies of the Club* and sold a few hundred copies. They had then received a draft contract from some entrepreneurs who thought they could, "make something happen" with the book. Ohio State asked Jane to review the contract and given them her advice on what points, if any, should be negotiated.

Jane knew one of the entrepreneurs from other business dealings in the publishing world. She knew he was a canny guy—if he thought he could "do something" with a book that had sold only a few hundred copies, she didn't want to stand in the way. On the other hand, she felt that the initial draft of the contract did not give adequate

protection to the legitimate rights of the Ohio State University Press, nor of Miss Santmyer. Jane marked up the contract heavily.

Thus began a long and grueling negotiating process. Jane worked closely with Richard Rose of OSU. This was in an age before one could send electronic versions of documents back and forth. Neither could one electronically compare two drafts of an agreement and generate a version that would show all of the changes from one version to the next. The process was as follows: Jane would give comments. A revised version of the contract would come back from the other side. Jane and Rich Rose would painstakingly review the new contract. It would contain a few changes to accommodate a few of Jane's many comments. Occasionally it would also contain some new and unexpected changes that were not announced, and that were not to the advantage of Ohio State or Miss Santmyer. Jane would get on the phone to negotiate further. Then she would mark up the new draft and send it back.

This process went on for months and it began to stress Jane enormously. She began frequently making references to this being the most expensive \$75 she had ever earned in her life. Another common statement was that one more consulting fee like this one and she would be bankrupt. This was vintage Jane. She worried about money. She

Carol Hemingway

complained from time to time. Nevertheless, she did the work, and she gave it her all. She was utterly faithful to her client, even at great personal cost to herself.

This was one of those rare events where Jane's good deed ultimately gave her a benefit that was more than just spiritual. As you all know, the entrepreneurs did indeed have some great abilities. *And Ladies of the Club* became a publishing sensation and author Helen Hooven Santmyer achieved considerable fame in the last years of her life. And Jane's devotion and integrity led Miss Santmyer to hire Jane to be her agent for her other works, bringing Jane and the agency significant revenues as well as prestige.

But from one who was there in the trenches, I can vouch that there were many similar stories in Jane's career—situations where she gave her all to a client or a project, and her only reward was the knowledge of a job well and faithfully done. That was the gift and the teaching that Jane gave to me. She taught me by example rather than words, and her inspiration will stay with me as long as I live.



MEMORIES OF JANE COME flooding in as I think of the years of our friendship. As a result of my junior year affiliation with the Smith College/University of Geneva group, I continued my associations with Smith friends in New York following our graduation (mine from Swarthmore College and the Yale Drama School). Characteristic of the more intellectual side of our friendship, I first met Jane attending a Shakespeare play at the Stratford, Connecticut Shakespeare Festival. Prior to curtain time, I ran into Mary Kane Blair (Hayes) of the Geneva group; Mary Kane, Jane and myself sat visiting on the grass with our fifties full cotton skirts spread out about us. We three shared the interests of well-educated, single, working women in New York with common acquaintances. From the first, I was impressed with the quick brilliance of Jane's mind.

Years later, Jane moved back to Los Angeles, where she established her literary agency and lived in a spacious apartment in Beverly Hills. On spring break from my faculty

position at City College of New York, I took advantage of Jane's invitation to visit the West Coast. Jane was a superb hostess, taking the time from her always hectic schedule to put on a sizeable dinner party and including me in a dinner dance. At the time, Jane confided that she was being courted long-distance by the distinguished lawyer, William O. Petersen, of Chicago. It was clear to me that Jane was in love.

In the course of my visit to Beverly Hills, Jane and I attended Palm Sunday church services—Jane dropping me off at the Presbyterian church in close proximity to the Catholic one. There was a large crowd already seated and as I searched for a seat, a woman in the back row waved insistently at me, pointing to an adjacent seat. I sat down and shot a grateful glance at my neighbor, whom I immediately identified as Greer Garson, forever Mrs. Miniver to me. At the end of the service, we chatted a bit and parted just as Jane appeared to pick me up. I pointed Miss Garson out to Jane and we both scrambled to catch her as she finished her adieus to the minister. Jane introduced herself as the daughter of Dr. Browne, who had removed Greer Garson's gall bladder, a surgical feat later confirmed by Dr. Browne himself. Jane explained to me that not only had her father been known as "surgeon to the stars," but had generously donated his services on weekends to more

lowly members of the Screen Actors Guild. Here perhaps, was the origin of Jane's life-long expertise on the subject of film and television. During the week as Jane's house guest, for example, I answered the phone and was met by a recognizable voice asking for, "Jane, please. This is Bob Stack." Jane was working on the biography of the movie star at the time.

Not long after Jane's marriage to Bill Petersen, Patrick Hemingway and I married at Pat's home in Montana. At one of our summer visits to fabled Black Point, I remember Vicky Browne saying, "Everyone is getting married." (Her words proved prescient when Mary Kane Blair married L. Russel Hayes.) Now Jane and Bill hosted the Hemingways both in Chicago and in Wisconsin. Through them we met our dear friends, Betsey and George Bobrinskoy; George became the Hemingway legal arm and following his death, Bill Petersen stepped into that position. At one point, Jane threw a dinner party for the Brobinskoyes and the Hemingways, including Pat's brother, Jack Hemingway. Clever Jane prepared a curry dish from *The Cookbook of Alice B. Toklas*, as Alice was one of Jack Hemingway's godmothers.

Through the years, the Petersens visited Montana as well, where Jane and Bill took up fly fishing. Jane had some background in spin-fishing from her California

Sandra Engle

childhood and took up a fly-rod with her usual dedication. Jane and Bill had some adventures with us both on the Missouri and Madison Rivers, where their experience with boats came in handy.

Because of the management of Hemingway copyrights, Pat and I attended the Frankfurt Book Fairs. Jane was always helpful in advising us about foreign publishers. We socialized at the events and benefited from the presence of a friendly face. Jane's western connections helped as well with, to us, the "foreign" cities of Anaheim and Las Vegas. Jane was always thoughtful and generous in the world of publishing where Pat and I were comparative novices.

How can one spare a friend with whom one has shared years and years of laughter, sport, intellectual, and business interests? Memories alone provide the answer. We miss you Jane, but will not forget.



I FIRST MET JANE WHEN I was 20 years old and a junior at Kalamazoo College. English literature was my passion, but I was by no means clear as to how to support myself with my passions. Through a series of seemingly thin coincidences, I learned about Jane Jordan Browne, Chicago literary agent. Like many would-be clients who had written to her before, I sent a "cold" letter along with my resume, asking if I could intern with her for three months. That letter changed my life. And then Jane changed my life.

Jane had a sharp wit, a sense of mischief, a powerful lion-mother instinct and an uncanny ability to know good people from bad. Those might not be the qualities that many will remember her by, given her expansive career. But they are the things that, for me, defined her as a woman and a friend.

When I first met Jane, I was intimidated by her. Her social standing, her educational background, even her address all seemed from a world so foreign to mine, where my parents lived paycheck to paycheck. Had that gap

remained, then it would have been my loss because Jane had so very much to share and teach. Very fortunately for me, I found Jane to be as approachable as she was eminent.

What I remember most about Jane is that she always went the extra mile for an author, no matter how many books he or she had sold. She would play the role of a press agent, booking radio and print interviews for a new book. She would regularly challenge publishers about their promotion of authors. I remember once she parked herself in the waiting room of a NYC publisher until they released a check that was long owed. It was a modest check, but it meant a lot to the client and so it meant a lot to Jane.

Balanced against this tenaciousness was also a profound sense of fairness. Jane knew that for many would-be authors, being published was a dream. She didn't trifle with that dream. She was candid when she had to be, but always tempered her comments with suggestions and other directions that the author might pursue.

Jane expected the same ethical behavior from those around her. The only time I ever saw her wounded was when a client or publisher didn't live up to this standard. But that experience would only steel her even more.

Leaving Jane and Multimedia was not easy, but my time had come to move on to other fields. For me, I thought it was entertainment law, and so I left MPD after four years as

her assistant to start law school. But thoughts of negotiating film deals in Hollywood soon dissipated when I started working in an indigent criminal defense clinic. I think I heard Jane's voice in the back of my mind reminding me how important it was to fight for justice on behalf of those who are easily exploited.

In the weeks since Jane has passed, I have been thinking about her a lot. In looking over my past, I see Jane's hand guiding me in so many decisions I have made since leaving Multimedia. I'm now a union organizer, helping workers who have no voice at work find justice and fairness. Even though I know she would chide me for being too radical, I can't help but think that Jane would be proud to know that my fight for justice was kindled by her example.



Matthew Rettenmund

I FOUND JANE JORDAN BROWNE in a “Jobs” binder at the University of Chicago. I’d moved to Chicago from my home in Michigan to get an education and find a new identity for myself, both of which I eventually accomplished due in large part to my discovery of a part-time position that was available with the literary agency founded and run by Jane. My friends, also forced to juggle work with studies, fought for jobs like handing out towels at the gym (which was said to pay well, but had a waiting list). I, on the other hand, could not believe my luck: who knew there even *were* literary agencies in Chicago?

My appointment with Jane and her assistant Sandra Engle was my first job interview ever. I was most nervous meeting Jane because she exuded so much purpose and determination. She promptly renamed me Matthew (gone was the too-casual Matt), and to my disbelief, I was hired before the interview ended. That led to a five-year education that overlapped and eventually overrode the education I was receiving at my college of choice.

My first few months with Jane were exasperating, like when you’re trying to learn how to type before your fingers take over for your brain. This was a time before our office had the luxury of a computer or even a fax machine, so I remember long hours spent addressing envelopes, preparing tax documents for Jane’s seemingly endless list of clients, or—most dreaded—filing onion-skin carbons of Jane’s prolific correspondence.

If this grunt work was not enough to sour me on the publishing biz, I had Jane’s high standards with which to contend. It seemed that whenever I did something wrong, Jane noticed. To be fair, my outlook at that time was, “Hey, this is a temporary situation. Who cares if I misfile something?” Jane had no patience for this kind of sloppiness. Her most memorable criticism of Early Matthew was that I lacked, “attention to detail.” This grave shortcoming could occasionally be downgraded—if I made the whopping mistake of not only doing something incorrectly but also ignoring Jane’s instructions—to “not having a very good memory.”

I almost lost hope.

What brought me back around was Jane’s encouragement to read all of her letters and memos I was charged with filing. Appropriately—considering Jane’s trade—they read like how-to manuals, classic literary correspondence

or great short stories. They were one-page page-turners! Reading them taught me the art of writing a great letter, of knowing intuitively when to mix the familiar with business. They taught me about negotiation, about documenting a deal, about which projects were hot and which were not and they taught me volumes about Jane's business and the business of publishing. Each detail I noticed added up until I saw the big picture. I was hooked and became fiercely loyal to Jane's venture.

Noting details about Jane via her words, I saw Jane in a new light. I saw her as a consummate businesswoman, a master communicator, a savvy publishing expert and also a very funny, warm and principled lady. (Women were always "ladies" to Jane, and those who displeased her were "beady," two Janeisms that survive in my vernacular to this day.) In short, I saw the big picture: I saw Jane as a whole person and not just as a boss.

When I graduated, I was finally able to work full-time with Jane as her assistant and associate. By then, Jane had ceased being simply a tough boss and had become a mentor. More importantly, Jane had become a good friend, one who was generous toward me in many ways beyond imparting her invaluable knowledge. Jane set up dozens of appointments for me when I decided to move to New York, she opened her home to me, she took me to my first

opera. Jane would also eventually represent me as an author, selling my first books and helping me realize my dreams.

I have so many memories of Multimedia—Jane calling off work so she and the staff could go see the latest Ken Russell movie, our infamous "Cat File" full of unnecessarily unpleasant letters (some people don't like agents . . . go figure), Jane rushing off to, "make Bill Petersen's dinner" (though I suspect he often wound up making it himself), the first time Jane agreed to represent an author I'd discovered, the time we wrote our own "How to Succeed in Publishing" booklet—all of which I'll cherish.

There are so many details in my head about my time working with Jane, and the big picture they create is the foundation for who I am as a worker, a writer and a person. I miss Jane, but I am never without the lessons she taught me.



Janie McAdams

WHEN I THINK ABOUT the years I worked with Jane, I mostly remember colors.

We were always turning the office upside-down to find her fleecy red winter hat. On cold winter mornings, searches for the hat among the manuscript boxes would lead to impromptu meetings about the manuscripts on our shelves. Jane would decide that an editor needed to be reminded about a project we had sent, and she would jump on the phone. The hat stayed lost for a while, and Jane made another sale.

On spring days, Jane would ride the train to the city from her lakeside home in Wisconsin. She would dash into the office with bags full of peonies and marigolds still damp from her garden. Depositing them on my desk, she would tell me to, “make one of your charming arrangements.” We had enough flowers to fill most of the shelves in the office, and Jane would marvel at each of my spiky, lopsided bouquets. Often, the vases were occupied by flowers clients

had sent to Jane, so we put peonies in coffee mugs and pencil holders.

Jane was the best editor I ever knew. We worked together on children’s books, and she always read picture book manuscripts with their future illustrations in mind. She could point a story in just the right direction for an illustrator to envision a heavy yellow sun or a cool dripping leaf. Jane imagined dancing pigs and orange buildings and little children with sand in their shoes.

Jane and I also worked together on romance novels and I remember how hard I laughed at her careful inspection of their covers. “I imagined the heroine a little less florid than this, but the hero has a nice cleft chin.” Jane loved her authors and always wanted their books to look as good from the outside as she knew they were on the inside. “Wasn’t this story set in Wyoming? Why are they embracing near a palazzo? At least he’s wearing chaps.”

Jane always wanted manuscript-editing to be a group effort, because she thought so highly of everyone who worked in the office. She often handed one of us a stack of pages she had read, colorful sticky tabs marking each of her comments. “Pick another color, and stick on your own comments,” she would say. Jane always loved a feathery-looking, multi-colored manuscript after editing.

Francine Rivers

When we were at Black Point one year, bobbing around in the lake in a yellow raft, Jane's very young relatives discovered the seaweed under the water. They pulled it up by the handful and began slinging it at the raft. A seaweed fight soon erupted, the waxy leaves clinging to the dock and the raft and everybody's hair. Nobody knew Jane was watching from the dock, but I think she enjoyed the scene more than anyone. She took many pictures and always laughed about, "that day with the seaweed and the little yellow boat."

On my last day of work, Jane gave me a pair of red wax lips. I think they were part of a Valentine someone sent her. She said, "These are very funny. Wear them for a minute, and then get back to work. I have a manuscript I want you to read."



THE FIRST TIME I HEARD about Jane Jordan Browne was at a writers' conference in Laguna Beach, California. As a novice writer with one published novel to my credit, and two very disappointing experiences with agents (one of whom co-mingled funds), I was seeking the advice of professionals. Jane's name came up several times during an agents' panel. She was highly respected by her peers, who were also in awe of her ability to find talent and sell books. She had a reputation for honesty and diligence.

After several nudges (shoves) from my husband, Rick, I sent Jane a query letter. She invited me to submit sample chapters. I did and then gnawed my fingernails while I waited. I couldn't have been more surprised (and pleased!) when she accepted me as a client. Within a few short weeks, she had sold two books for me, the second of which became a lead title for Ace.

It was an entirely new experience for me to have regular communication with my agent. Jane copied me on everything! She said bad news would come by mail, but

good news by phone. I loved those phone calls! She continued to encourage me, even as we both faced less than honest editors. Jane never hesitated to confront someone who failed to keep his word. And her combination of wit, wisdom and starch always hit the target.

My secular market career was solid and on the upswing when I became a born-again Christian and was struck by writers' block. I didn't write for over two years. When I resumed, Jane weathered my frustration when publishers called asking for another book just like the last one. She didn't press me to write anything, but when the flood gates opened, she worked overtime to do as I asked—get the *Redeeming Love* manuscript into an editor's hand before Christmas! Unfortunately, that editor quickly rejected the book because it was a Christian allegory. Jane and I laughed over all that later.

It was Jane who guided me into the Christian market with my next novel, *A Voice in the Wind*. And it was Jane who brought me to the attention of Tyndale House and, “a marriage made in heaven.” With Christian fiction just opening up, agents were a relatively new thing for Christian publishers, and Jane had some educating to do. She was always gracious and gentle, but firm about proper protocol. Everything goes through the agent. She was my shield.

Jane worked tirelessly over the next ten years to get my books printed into other languages. She was especially determined to have *Redeeming Love* (salvation message), *The Atonement Child* (pro-life message) and *Leota's Garden* (sanctity of life message) into Dutch. When an invitation for me to do a book tour came, she also encouraged me to go to Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Holland and Norway, not just to sell books, but more importantly to talk about the impact of my faith on my writing and my life.

Jane was a woman of strong faith. We talked about our shared faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We prayed for one another. I am convinced that nothing can separate her from the Lord and that she is in His presence right now. As much as I miss Jane as my mentor and friend, I rejoice for her. And I look forward to the day when I will see her again, for I know I will.



AFTERWORD

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK the following contributors to this volume and also offer a few words about each:

Kilbee Brittain was one of Jane's friends from childhood and part of an interesting and challenging group that Jane looked forward to seeing whenever she could. Kilbee's comments are from a memorial mass held for Jane's Los Angeles friends at Good Shepherd Church in Beverly Hills in March 2003.

Melinda Corey was one of Jane's first Chicago associates. Jane considered her very capable and was also very fond of her and enjoyed the progress of her development.

Axel Madsen was one of Jane's earliest clients and is a prolific writer of interesting biographies. Jane had a wonderful relationship with Axel and his wife, Midori, over many years.

Mary Kane Blair Hayes was maid of honor at our wedding. Her friendship with Jane began at the Ethel Walker School and they remained close thereafter.

Jane was fascinated with space, astronomy and history. Accordingly, working with noted archaeoastronomer Ed (E.C.) Krupp and his wife Robin was a combination of friendship, agenting, and interesting topics.

Jane loved Sandra Dallas' novels and even Jane's mother approved of them highly.

Jane and I had one sore point: how much time should we allow to get to the airport. This required negotiations. As I would call frantically to see if she had actually left the office, Greg had to give an answer dictated by Jane. But I could always tell from the inflection of his voice whether he was being truthful. These were the only lies I knew Jane was capable of.

Carol Hemingway, shared an interest in theater with Jane and provoked much thought and discussion. She and Pat also provided wonderful fly fishing vacations in Craig, Montana, along the Missouri River.

Rita Emmett, Jane's anti-procrastination client, fondly called Jane, "She Who Must Be Obeyed." Rita didn't know the Sandra Engle-era. Sandra cowed Jane and everyone else. In fact, she was always right.

Matthew Rettenmund made the agency much more, "with it," through his admiration of—and on whom he later based his first book—Madonna.

Janie McAdams was one of the number of associates who went on to law school after working for Jane. The two professions are not disparate. Jane always admired the quiet way Janie accomplished her goals.

Francine Rivers, a long-time client, was Jane's first author to bring spirituality into her work. This was an area that Jane found most satisfying as well as compatible with her own interests and beliefs, and which happened to conclude her life's work.

WILLIAM O. PETERSEN

