

Bette Jeanne Sage

September 27, 1925 ~ November 22, 2024

Bette Jeanne Decker Cannon Sage was born on September 27, 1925, to Valaite (Goff) and Stan Decker as the middle child of their five children. She passed away on November 22, 2024, having graced her family and friends for nearly a hundred years. The same year she was born her father, Stan Decker, first came to Green River Lakes hunting, and founded the GP Bar Ranch which the family ran for 40 years, always reminding his family that we were “newcomers” compared to the ranchers who settled the Sublette Country for whom the family had the greatest respect.

Bette Jeanne grew up as a woman of the West on the GP Bar influenced by the extraordinary guests who came from all over the United States. She graduated from Rowland Hall in Salt Lake City in 1943 where she wrote the music for the school song. She went on to attend Mills College where she studied music theory under Darius Milhaud, a mentor of Dave Brubeck. Although her father telegrammed her “Do not take any steps relative to matrimony until this war is entirely over,” she ignored the advice and married Morris Cannon in June 1945 after his return from the South Pacific. In the 1950s when he became a young art director at NBC she began dividing her time between California and Wyoming. After his untimely death in 1962, she was suddenly a widow at 36 raising two sons as a single mom. The ranch at Green River Lakes which she managed, and on which the boys worked in 1964 and 1965, was their anchor.

She married Jim Sage in 1966, living in Manhattan Beach and Palos Verdes, California, always returning to Cora. Her marriage to Jim, like her marriage to Morris, lasted 17 years, ending with Jim’s death in 1983. Seven years after being widowed twice, she began a long-term relationship with George Cannon, Morris’s older brother, which also lasted 17 years until his death in 2007. In the last 13 years of their time together George was severely disabled by a stroke. Although he lost his ability to speak, he could sing and play the piano and they communicated through music. After his death, she lived alone, always longing to be up on the head of the Green River where her sons built a cabin on an old ranch inholding.

Her sparkling wit and wonderful laugh made her the best of audiences. She will always be remembered as a great friend who companioned well. People rejoiced in the time they had with her. Music gave her both inspiration and solace. In later years she called her baby grand piano “my psychiatrist.” She played the piano by ear, like she did everything else.

Although she was a dude rancher’s daughter to the core, she was never stuck in one time or place. She was as at home in Los Angeles, New York or Paris, as she was in Cora. She struck an exquisite paradoxical balance: she was as introspective as she was gregarious, as frugal as she was generous, as much a genuine intellectual as she was the life of the party. She was an analytical critical thinker who was extraordinarily compassionate and

empathetic. She loved to reminisce but was never sentimental. Hers was an exciting and joyful, but steady, hand.

She loved horses and rode into her nineties.

In the last fifty years she found community in Big Horn, Sheridan and Cora, Wyoming and Salt Lake City. She unfailingly entertained, delighted, and occasionally advised her sons, Kim Cannon (Laura Lehan) of Big Horn and Stan Cannon (Joanne Rubino) of Lander; her grandchildren Sage Miller (Jeff Miller) of Kuna, Idaho, Meredith Groshart (Stephen Groshart) of Big Horn, Kevin Knapp of Sheridan and Grace Cannon-Wallace (Ian Cannon-Wallace) of Sheridan; and her great-grandchildren, Weston and Wyatt Miller; Evan, Logan and Cannon Groshart; Ophelia Brandow and Sirus Knapp; and Sonja Wallace. She is survived by many extraordinary nephews and nieces, but three who were more like daughters were Jane Sinton (Oakland, California), Annette Nibley (Salt Lake City) and Carolyn Cannon (Pug Ostling) (Boise, Idaho).

She is also survived by her stepdaughters Sandy Farber of Tempe, Arizona and Susie Anthis (Gary) of Palm Desert, California and two former daughters-in-law, Jane Howard of Bozeman, Montana and Susan Clinch of Sheridan.

The family is particularly grateful for the help and support for Bette Jeanne over the last 19 months provided by Bert and Janet Page at the Bench Towers in Salt Lake, and Malia Tae, Karen Vea and Denise Kaafi who took care of her, as well as Erin Gates who served magnificently as a Hospice RN and her “confidential confidante.”

There will be a celebration of this life well lived in “her mountains”—the Wind Rivers—August 13-16, 2025, at which her ashes will be scattered. In the meantime, there will be a memorial gathering at the Sky Room at the Bench Towers, 3125 Kennedy, Salt Lake City, Utah on December 22, 2024, from 4 to 7 pm. People who knew her are welcome. It will be the kind of celebration of which she would approve. Stories will be told.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to The Wyo Theater in Sheridan, Wyoming.