

Jane Vincent McIlwaine

June 28, 1931 ~ December 10, 2025

Listening to music and likely dreaming of her next dance, Jane Vincent McIlwaine, 94, passed away peacefully at sunset on December 10, 2025. Born in New York City to Mary McClellan Hepburn (Gillies) and Carlos Enrique Lazo Guiral, Jane grew up on Long Island and New York City. She attended Friends Academy and The Chapin School before completing a dance degree from Bennett Junior College in Millbrook, New York. She further studied dance with Martha Graham and with the New York City Ballet.

Jane married her first husband, James R. Shepard, M.D., in 1952 and raised their three daughters in Irvington, NY. Later divorced, she married music educator Mitchell C. Vincent in 1967 and expanded her family to include his three children. Upon his retirement in 1970 they moved from the suburbs of New York to the rural north in Sugar Hill, New Hampshire. In 1976, through a town bicentennial project, Jane and Vince worked with a group of local enthusiasts to create the Sugar Hill Historical Museum. With a profound appreciation for history and an easy way with people, Jane leant a capable hand to museum curation, gathering heirlooms and artifacts from local families to showcase the adaptations to landscape and simple pleasures of life in the north country.

Widowed after 35 years, Jane married her third and last husband, John C. McIlwaine in 2003. This added four more stepchildren and a chocolate lab puppy to an ever-growing list of loved ones. The short marriage in late life lasted just over a year but was described by her as one of ‘pure joy’. She brought the dog , Duncan, with her when she moved west eight years later, and Duncan shepherded her into a last chapter of spending time with children and grandchildren in Salt Lake City. In her adopted new home, she made treasured acquaintances at Parklane and Cottonwood Creek living facilities and volunteered to read with early elementary students around the community. Her civic engagement in the last five years led her to Neighborhood House, first as a volunteer and ultimately where she enjoyed daytime activities as a client.

Throughout her long life, Jane’s creativity was what defined her. She was an avid gardener and designed beautiful outdoor spaces. Her love of arts and crafts was masterfully reflected in sketching, sewing, quilting, and weaving. As a young mother she taught herself how to cook and she honed her skills over the years to become most proud of her homemade bread. Most of all Jane was drawn to and defined by music. She taught herself both piano and guitar by ear, not learning how to read music until her 30’s, when she joined community choral groups. She sang for four decades with The Hudson Bells choir in Westchester County, NY and The Pine Hill Singers in Littleton, NH. Closer to home, she routinely sang with her three young daughters - teaching them 3–4-part harmonies, sitting them on the piano bench with her while she played for them, and encouraging them to sing alongside her with small groups of friends. There were many evenings of music at dinner parties with her violinist husband Vince, and later with her husband John anywhere and everywhere it moved them.

Jane is survived by her three daughters, Sandra Shepard, Sarah Shepard Scott (Jeffrey), and Mary Shepard (Ed Lynch); seven stepchildren, Jacqueline Vincent, Jim Vincent (Robin), Ginger Vincent Foss, Graham McIlwaine (Cindy Owings), Penny McIlwaine, Melinda McIlwaine, and Sharon McIlwaine (Andy Flagg); twenty-one grandchildren, and sixteen great-grandchildren. She is preceded in death by her parents, Mary Hepburn (George) Gillies, and Carlos Lazo Guiral; her three husbands, James R. Shepard, Mitchell C. Vincent and John C. McIlwaine; and her sister, Meleanor Lazo (Don) Deming.

Though she is gone, she would encourage us to follow her lead and laugh, love, sing, and dance with every ounce of our being. She will be sorely missed.

Memorial Services are planned for July 11,2026 in Sugar Hill, New Hampshire.