

Kathryn Wasserman Davis

1907-2013



Kathryn Wasserman Davis lived a long and full life traveling and experiencing the world. She was a woman from a wealthy background, and because of this she was able to help society in the ways she saw fit. Davis challenged youth by advocating the importance of world peace in their lives, and encouraged them to care for and support others. She ceaselessly promoted the welfare of local communities. To accomplish this, she donated 20 million dollars to local projects throughout the Hudson River Valley to restore and beautify the region. Her views on both international affairs and the equality of all people remain as models for the youth everywhere, proving that global and local good can be done with zealousness and passion. Mrs. Davis led the way for change in so many aspects of society and showed what being an amazing woman is all about. It is for these reasons that she should be promptly inducted into the Tarrytown-Sleepy Hollow Hall of Fame.

Commemorative Essay by Maggie Singman, Tarrytown

Sleepy Hollow High School, May, 2017

Kathryn Wasserman Davis

Born on February 25th, 1907 in Philadelphia, to a wealthy family, Mrs. Davis was educated in Washington D.C. and afterwards attended Wellesley College. She then received a Master's Degree in International Relations from Columbia University and a doctorate from the University of Geneva in Switzerland. While at Columbia, she fell in love with the Hudson River and New York State as a whole. After her doctoral thesis was published, she began to write articles about foreign affairs, and became a popular lecturer to civic groups worldwide. While studying in Switzerland, she met her future husband, Shelby Cullom Davis. Their mutual interest in foreign affairs sparked a lifelong love affair with travel and each other. Mr. Davis served as the U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland from 1969 to 1975, and together the couple explored many countries around the world. After working at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, Mrs. Davis bought a hilltop home overlooking the Hudson River in Tarrytown, NY.

Following the death of her husband in 1994, Davis decided to devote the rest of her life to philanthropy. She served on the Wellesley College Board of Directors for many years, during which she supported such causes as increased financial aid for students, professorships in Slavic studies, teaching global education initiatives. She helped establish the Davis Museum and Cultural Center, and invested her inheritance into research in genetics, regenerative medicine, and glaucoma, as well as community college education for immigrants and Planned Parenthood. Institutions worldwide reflect her

efforts, including the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University and the Shelby and Kathryn Davis Library at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, Switzerland.

As Davis grew older, she began to realize that she needed to allow herself to relax and wind down from her adventuresome and tightly packed schedule. At the age of 91, she began kayaking along the Hudson River and along the coast of Maine. She once said, “Up and down this Hudson Valley and across America, we need to be vigilant for opportunities to protect our natural resources. It gives me great joy to have my name and the Davis name linked with the Scenic Hudson forevermore.” She began to embrace the nature around her and decided that the beauty of our natural resources should have a bright light shone on them. When she turned 100 years old, she donated \$20 million to the Scenic Hudson Inc., an environmental organization dedicated to the proposition that the Hudson River Valley is a natural treasure to be preserved forever, “not paved over for profit.” Her generous donation has led to major riverfront park improvements and has allowed all citizens of Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow to enjoy what she called, “God’s gift to all; the Hudson River.”

Kathryn Wasserman Davis was not only an altruistic woman, but she was one who was deeply enthusiastic and committed to making a change for the better in the world. Throughout all 106 years of her life, her contributions did not go unnoticed. Mrs. Davis was very fortunate to be born into a wealthy family, but she used her money to her advantage by aiding communities in order to enhance

the natural beauty that she wanted everyone to experience. Once portrayed in The Hudson Independent as “Tarrytown Treasure,” Kathryn Wasserman Davis should be inducted into the Tarrytown-Sleepy Hollow Hall of Fame because of her selfless achievements, which helped better our neighborhoods as a whole.

Citations:

"Kathryn W. Davis | Projects for Peace." Projects for Peace: The Vision of Kathryn W. Davis. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Apr. 2017.

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