



Jean O'Keefe Wilson

July 12, 1947 - April 15, 2026

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Jean O'Keefe Wilson, who died in April 2026 in the company of her family.

Jean was born on July 12, 1947, in Long Beach, California, to Alvin and Rose Kief. She was the fourth of five children. Shortly after she was born, the family moved to Cottage Grove, Oregon, so her father, a diesel mechanic, could work on the large dam projects in the area. She spent her early years there and graduated from Cottage Grove High School.

Jean's personality showed up early. Her sister Helen described her as someone who "had to do something for attention—that's why you're such a brat," but also said, "It's a miracle the sun comes up every morning to compete with you as bright as you are." Both were true, and that combination of spirit and brightness stayed with her throughout her life.

After high school, Jean moved to Los Angeles and worked as a bank teller before returning to the Pacific Northwest in the early 1970s. She began working at NW Natural Gas, where her love of card games really took hold. She played countless games of Pitch with coworkers—likely in place of the work that was supposed to be getting done.

Jean later enrolled in the nursing program at the University of Portland, where

she found her true calling. While the degree was in nursing, it reflected something deeper in her—a true caretaker. She went on to work for many years as a CCU and ICU nurse, and later became the Head Nurse of the Medical Unit at Emanuel Hospital, where she met her husband, Dr. John Wilson. Together they later opened a mom-and-pop cardiology clinic at Emanuel. They were married for 35 years before John passed away in 2014.

Jean had a wide range of interests and stayed active in her community. She was an avid reader and a member of book groups. She was also a member of the The Country Gardens Club and served as the Recording Secretary. Through her involvement in the AK Chapter of P.E.O. (Philanthropic Educational Organization), she supported women's education, including opening her home to a medical student during a rotation in Portland.

Jean played bridge regularly and enjoyed hosting her group at home. She volunteered with Meals on Wheels. Jean was a wonderful cook and enjoyed cuisines from all over the world. She shared this love of cooking and good food with her family.

Jean loved to travel. She especially enjoyed trips through Europe and Mexico and traveled as far as Morocco—twice—as well as Chile and Argentina. She also returned often to the Oregon Coast with friends and family. Jean and John shared many adventures together, including UW Husky football games, road trips to go fly fishing, golf, and time in Hawaii.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Alvin and Rose Kief; her older sister Mabel; and her husband, Dr. John Wilson. She is survived by her sisters Helen and Rosa Lee, her little brother Jimmy, her children Jana, Mike, and Patrick, and her faithful companion, Gus.

Jean will be remembered for her energy, her generosity, her sense of humor,

and the way she stayed connected to the people and communities around her. She will be deeply missed.

If you would like to make a donation in Jean's memory, her charity of choice was the Community Transitional School.

—Her children