

Marjorie Shaw Jeffries has always known what she wanted. From promoting bike paths, to pioneering environmental friendly practices, to promoting women's voting rights, and to serving Milton as a longtime Town Meeting Member. In her long and full life, Marge has been a fierce advocate for causes she believed in and famous for politely - but firmly - speaking for people about those ideals. She is known for brooking no objection to her plans and often, by sheer force of will, bringing others along on her various philanthropic missions. But nothing has ever captured her time, passion, and purpose like the Milton Public Library.

I was swept into Marge's library passion on the third day after I moved to Milton in 1997 when I went into the library to apply for a library card. Marge was behind me in line and overheard me mention to the librarian that my Mother was a former teacher and librarian and that , while we moved often while I grew up , we always got a library card as soon as possible. Marge immediately introduced herself - and then asked me to follow her. Down we went to the small library basement and into a Friends of the Library Meeting that was just starting. She proceeded to tell me that a recent ballot initiative had failed and that we needed a plan to renovate and restore the library. I was taken by her commitment and love for the library and proceeded to follow Marge's lead. I soon joined the Friends, then the Board of Library Trustees, and then to the Milton Library Foundation. Marge's passion for our great library was clearly infectious.

Marge rarely shared personal information about herself, even to close friends, but in a rare moment, Marge mentioned that when she was a young girl, her family status required that she be driven to school while all the other students walked. It clearly irked her to be separated from the rest of the world. When asked what consumed her thoughts each day as a passenger on that trip back and forth to school, she answered that for years she "wanted to be out of that vehicle and into the big world that she had read about in books". For those of us who have seen Marge flying past on her blue bicycle on her way to any number of Milton meetings it is hard to believe that any mere vehicle could hold her back for any length of time. It is, however, very easy to believe that she carried with her a lifelong and passionate love for books beginning from those early days.

In her decades of service to and for the Milton Public Library, Marge has not just loved the Milton Library from afar or just via her checkbook: she immersed herself in supporting the entire library program and community with a force that took your breath away. From her leadership in all Library facets, she shared her vision of a newly restored and renovated Library, pushing through with two ballot efforts to finally achieve this goal, even gifting her talents as a flutist playing concert after concert to raise funds to support the renovation plan, cajoling Milton neighbors into supporting the massive, mostly private fundraising effort by gathering money, time, and in-kind donations from residents who may have never set foot into the library were it not for Marge's drive to realize her vision. Failure to Marge simply was not an option. It was easy to be carried along with Marge's vision of a library as a cultural community center. Marge spoke passionately and determinedly to this vision. To Marge, a library represented not just a treasure trove of knowledge and a place for "community", but symbolized a world of lifelong learning and empowerment. To Marge, the library was, and is, the great equalizer.

There is little wonder that the Milton Library Foundation has chosen Marjorie Shaw Jeffries as their 2017 Literary Gala Honoree. Please mark your calendars for November 1, 2017 when Marge's family, friends, Milton neighbors, and wonderful library supporters will gather at Granite Links in Quincy to honor Marge's many years of service to her/our beloved library, eat a fabulous meal, listen to remarks by

Michael Tougias, the author of “The Finest Hours” and, as Marge would say, “Get out into the world and support our fabulous library. Now, please.”

Kathy Fagan Bauer