

Behind the Jean E. Brink Pool name is a quiet worker bee

An interview-biography with Pacifican Jean Brink by Jean Bartlett ([www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com))

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Written by Jean Bartlett, March 9, 2023  
(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)



On the City of Pacifica's website under Parks, Beaches & Recreation ~ [Aquatics](#), there is information on the Jean E. Brink Pool, some of which is noted here.

*"The Brink Swimming Pool is a 10-lane, 25-yard indoor pool that is open year-round. The City of Pacifica, Parks Beaches & Recreation Department is the primary user of the pool and offers a wide array of aquatic programs for participants. The Brink pool boasts a 1-meter and a 3-meter diving board. Depth ranges from 3 feet to 12 feet. Pool temperature is maintained at 82 degrees. There are dressing rooms that include lockers; however, participants must provide their own locks and towels."*

←Jean Brink at home in Pacifica, February, 2023. (Jean Bartlett photo.)

Located on the Oceana High School Campus, the former "Oceana Pool" was closed at the end of May 2009 for voter-approved structural upgrades. On August 28, 2010, a teeth-chattering, summer gray day in Pacifica—I know, I was there reporting on the event for the *Pacifica Tribune*—a crowd of well-wishers came out to officially dedicate the Jean E. Brink Pool, and give longtime Pacifican Jean Brink a booming round of applause. Then and now, Jean admits to feeling both honored and somewhat uncomfortable with the recognition.

"I am a little embarrassed by having my name on the pool," Jean said. "People are really nice to me at the pool and I get a lot of 'Hi, Jean!' and I do appreciate that."

But occasionally, Jean will be introduced to someone who is awed by Jean's local fame and she doesn't know what to make of that.

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"Like everyone else, I put my pants on, one leg at a time," Jean laughed, noting that one of the funnier experiences from having her own personal locker at the pool—decorated with a 'Jean Brink' nameplate, courtesy of the Jefferson Union High School District—is that occasionally people will ask if the locker contains Jean Brink's ashes.

"No, still here!" Jean chuckled.



Jean Bartlett photo

**In August of 2010, Jean Brink was joined for the pool dedication by, among many others, the entire 2010 Board of Trustees for the Jefferson Union High School District; JUHSD Superintendent Mike Crilly; Oceana High School Principal Caro Pemberton, Pacifica City Councilmembers, including Mayor Sue Digre; numerous representatives from Pacifica's PB&R as well as the Chamber of Commerce; and Jean's granddaughter, Serena Jean Ritenour.**

Jean began going to Oceana Pool when it first opened in June of 1978 and except for pool closures or personal vacations, she has been a weekly/often daily regular since.

"I still get up every morning, brush my teeth, put on my bathing suit and I'm at the pool at 7," Jean noted. "Occasionally, I am there later when I do meditation at 8 a.m. Going to the pool is my happy place. I wouldn't even call myself a swimmer these days. I used to swim, of course. But now I aqua jog in the deep water."

Aqua joggers wear flotation devices either around their waist or between their legs, and then mimic jogging in the deep end of the pool. Aqua jogging is both an excellent cardiovascular exercise and it increases muscular strength.

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Over the years, Jean has been referred to as the unofficial "eye on the pool" – alerting the School District regarding "user concerns, graffiti, or maintenance that needed attention." Several years ago, Jean spoke with Anthony Schriver, Recreation Coordinator, Aquatics, about the need for a dedicated aqua jogging pool lane.

"Maybe there were six of us who wanted to aqua jog, and I was concerned that we could make a mess of the rotational swimmers if we used several lanes. Anthony, who is so good at getting things done, got it done the next day."

Jean, who served on the Jefferson Union High School District Board of Trustees from 1988-2008, is also noted on Pacifica's PB&R website as a: *"committee person and volunteer for Pacifica's annual Fog Fest, a member of the Library Task Force and a volunteer at Sunset Ridge Elementary School. Her service has been recognized by the City of Pacifica as the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Department Volunteer of the Month and by the California Parks and Recreation Society's District IV Volunteer Award."*

"I like to help other people," Jean said. "And as a volunteer, I want to be a worker bee. This was ingrained in me in my childhood."

\* \* \*



Jean Ellen (Chapman) Brink was born on August 1, 1941, in Decatur, Indiana. Her parents were Lt. Col. Donald L. Chapman, U.S. Army, and Chetina Francis (DeLong) Chapman. Jean's sister Jane is 11 months older. "We are what is called Irish twins!"

The term "Irish twins" originated in the 1800s and it is a humorous way to refer to siblings who are born 12 months apart or less.

"My mother was from Maquoketa, Iowa, and she was born in 1914. When she was four years old, her mother had her wisdom teeth pulled (chloroform was the medical anesthesia of choice back then) and evidently they gave her mom too much anesthetic and she died. At that time, my mother's father worked at a hotel in Indianapolis, IN, but it was decided that that was not an appropriate place to raise a child and my mother moved to Delphi, IN, to live with her aunt and uncle.

◀Held by her mom, Jean and her sister Jane were photographed with their parents in Delphi, IN, summer of 1942.

"My father was born in December of 1911 in Chenoa, Illinois. When he was 4, he moved with his family to Delphi, IN. My father's mother's family, the Robinsons, were the first settlers in Carroll County, which is where Delphi is."

Jean's paternal grandmother, Estella (Robinson) Chapman Givler "Stella," was born on August 6, 1884, in Madison Township, Carroll County, IN, to William Henry Robinson and Harriet (Trobaugh) Robinson.

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Stella's great grandfather, Henry Robinson—who would become Carroll County's first settler—was born in 1778 in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and married Elizabeth Coleman in the spring of 1799, in Scott County, Kentucky. The couple, who had six children, moved to Miami County, Ohio, in 1806, and then to Montgomery County, Ohio in 1811. Henry was noted as an exceptional mechanic, mill builder and mill owner.

According to the Robinson family record: *"On the 18th day of October 1824, Henry, Jezekiah and Abner Robinson, with their families, accompanied by Joseph Clymer and his son, and a Mr. James French, started for the Wabash Valley."*

As they traveled, they were met by naysayers. "You'll never get through the wilderness!" With others in their party purchasing residences along the way, Henry Robinson and his eldest, son Abner, rode on horseback with no other directions than *"to follow the Indiana Trail."* On December 21, 1824, Henry and Abner, entered two sections of land, 80 acres each, in what became Deer Creek Township, Carroll County, IN. Having secured the land, the men worked through dense timber to cut a wagon road, then began building a cabin. By Friday evening, January 7, 1825, members of the Robinson family sat down in their newly enclosed cabin and lit a fire in the hearth.

The location of the Robinsons' land was on the south bank of Deer Creek, on the bluff, about one mile east of the court house in Delphi, and near the high bluff at the foot of which is the site of the old dam on Deer Creek. The settlement progressed and in 1827, two stores opened. On July 14, 1828, Henry Robinson was elected Carroll County's first Justice of the Peace, and served five years. On July 4, 1845, Carroll County's first settler, was laid to rest in *"the old Robinson cemetery."* Nearly 40 years after Henry Robinson's death, his great granddaughter Stella Robinson was born.

"My grandmother outlived two men, before I was even born. Her first husband was my father's father, Renn Chapman, who died in 1916 from pneumonia. Her second husband was William Givler, who also preceded her in death." In addition, Jean's grandmother Stella lived long enough to see her only child, Jean's father Donald, pass before her. Donald Chapman died on January 7, 1969, and his mother died on the first day of January, 1971.



**Jean's paternal grandparents, Stella and Renn Chapman, circa 1909.**

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"My dad grew up on a farm and my grandmother remained very much a farmer. It is from my grandmother that I learned how people come together to help each other out – because during harvesting time, that's exactly what happened. All the farmers around the area would come and work together. I saw community and that made an impression.

"How did my parents meet? I've always presumed my parents went to the same high school and that's how they knew each other, but I'm not sure on that. I do know that after high school, my mother studied for two years at Indiana University Bloomington (IU). College for women back then was not unheard of but it was unusual. My father went to Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, where he received his degree in engineering. Following college, my dad worked for Duncan Electric in Lafayette and then as a purchasing agent for Central Soya Co. in Decatur, Indiana. My parents married on November 23, 1939.

"I'm not sure exactly when my father became a Lieutenant Colonel, but from my earliest memories he was an officer. I did not see him often during the Second World War. He served active duty during WWII in the Pacific and in Europe. Later he served in the Korean War. I do remember that sometimes he would be gone for a year.

"My grandmother and I got along great. She was hugely important to me and I loved going to her house which was on the outskirts of Delphi. I still remember every room. In one area, she kept a drawer, especially filled with toys and puzzles for her granddaughters – and now I have a grandmother drawer in my house. She had one bedroom that had her husband's Army uniforms from WWI. In another room, she had a brass bed and all kinds of clothes I could put on – and drawers I could open. I could not go into the living room unless she took me in to look at all her treasures. I never minded. Kids understand rules."



**Jean relaxes on her grandmother's farm, circa 1945.**



**Jean's grandmother, Stella (Robinson) Chapman Givler.**

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"My grandmother had cats on her farm and I am definitely a fan of cats as well as dogs. And how I loved playing in the barn. It was one of those places where your imagination could just go wild as a kid. You walked over this little path, over this tiny, tiny bridge – as a child it was magic.

"The thing about my grandmother's house is it didn't have showers. It didn't have a bathroom. We went out to the outhouse. We pumped our water outdoors. When she got running water indoors we were still pumping, we weren't turning on the faucet. We didn't mind any of this. It was just normal. My grandmother grew soybeans and corn and she did have some cows that grazed and then were slaughtered. She had chickens. They laid eggs and we gathered the eggs. I went out and picked out the chicken we were going to have for dinner. I remember them popping the chicken down on a block and then I cut its head off. I remember putting the chickens in hot water and taking the feathers off. I saw the whole process. This was a working farm and while I don't remember working very hard, especially when I was little, I wanted to work. I'm not one for sitting back when I can do something.

"Delphi was our home base. Whenever we could, we lived where my father was stationed. Every three years he was reassigned until I entered junior high school."

It was when her father was stationed at Camp Crowder in Neosho, Missouri, during the Second World War, that Jean and her sister had their first experience with a well-defined body of water.

Constructed in 1941 and 1942, Camp Crowder was a signal corps training center for the United States Army. It was approximately 66,000 acres and among its 1,600 buildings were: a brig, several churches, a theater, gymnasium, classrooms, barracks and mess halls, as well as a POW camp. These were primarily German prisoners captured from (German) General Rommel forces in North Africa. But what Jean and her sister Jane remember is the Camp had a fishery and they had never seen such a thing.

"People think I have been swimming all my life, but really, I didn't learn to swim until I was in college. I took it as a course. I didn't have the chance when I was little and then came the polio scare, and most definitely avoidance of public swimming pools until the polio vaccine was developed in the mid-1950s."

Very contagious, poliovirus spreads through contact with the stool of an infected person, or "droplets from a sneeze or cough." In swimming pools, lakes, ponds and the like, the poliovirus passes from person to person by infected water. For more information on the poliovirus, visit the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) website.

There were several polio epidemics throughout the world between 1948 and 1955, and in the United States in the late 1940s, these more frequently occurring polio outbreaks disabled more than 35,000 individuals each year, in addition to paralyzing 500,000 throughout the world annually, and taking that many lives annually as well.

In 1950, Major Donald L. Chapman was assigned to the U.S. Mannheim Army Base in Heidelberg, Germany, and his family came with him.

"Where we lived in Heidelberg, it was all American Army people and so we didn't have that full experience of living in another country. But the next year we moved to Paris. I was 9 when we moved there. For the first two months, we lived in a hotel and then we moved to a humongous house in Sèvres, a southwestern residential suburb of Paris. The woman who owned it, liked to rent to Army people. Her name was Madame Monyet and she lived in the servant's quarters which were quite spacious. The home had its own garden and we had a gardener. It had all this Louis XV furniture. It had velvet on the walls in the dining room. It was three stories. Coming from the small town of Delphi, Indiana, where there is the

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courthouse and it in turn is bounded by four streets, and that's it, to living in Paris and then just outside of Paris – it was thrilling! First of all, I loved riding bikes, roller skating and climbing trees, and I could do all of that in our home in Sèvres. I remember it had a beautiful willow tree and the yard was so massive, I don't think it can even be called a yard. For me, it was the perfect place for make believe."



**Jean's childhood home in Sèvres, France, just outside of Paris.**

"My mother homeschooled us. It was a correspondence school. I remember this book that I had, had little stamps of famous paintings and we would talk about the painting and then put the stamp on the page, and then we would go to the Louvre in Paris and see the real thing. My mother made sure that we saw a lot of things in Paris and many other places outside of Paris as well, including: Chartres (famous for its gothic cathedral, Notre-Dame de Chartres Cathedral); and Mont-Saint-Michel (a tidal island in Normandy, famous for Mont-Saint-Michel Abbey). My mother saw to it that we really appreciated our environment.

"We went to the U.S. Embassy in Paris a lot. When we lived in Paris, we went there every day for lunch. We would go to the commissary. As a kid, I loved talking to people but that unfortunately got me into trouble. At the Embassy, I would talk to the guards and one day, I found myself talking to a general's wife. My father was not a general and as I learned from that moment on, you did not do that. Even the kids had to observe the rules."

Military tradition prohibits such fraternization and in this particular case even more so as young Jean was chatting away with Mamie Eisenhower, wife of 5 Star General and future 34th President of the United States Dwight D. Eisenhower.

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Thankfully, her scolding did not diminish her love of Paris or of the U.S. Embassy in Paris.

"To this day, I watch the Tour de France just to see the U.S. Embassy building as they ride by. I've been back to Paris, just once since that time, and that included a visit to the Embassy."



In 1952, when Jean was in sixth grade, the family returned to the United States.

"It wasn't until I was entering junior high school and then high school that I really felt like I could call a place home. And that place was West Lafayette, Indiana."

Then a population of about 12,000, West Lafayette is now home to close to 45,000. Located in Wabash Township, Tippecanoe County, West Lafayette is 65 miles northwest of Indiana's state capital, Indianapolis. It is directly across the Wabash River from its sister city, Lafayette.

Jean's father taught Army ROTC at Purdue University's flagship campus in West Lafayette, and was later Commander of the Army Reserve Training Center in Purdue, during which time the Reserve Armory on South Street was built. Her father also left for active duty in Korea.

Fought between June 25, 1950 and July 27, 1953, the Korean War was the first military action of the Cold War. The Cold War began not long after the Second World War ended. Lasting close to 50 years, the Cold War was between the United States and the Soviet Union, and each country's respective allies. At its base was the ideological fight between capitalism and communism. The Korean War took the lives of 33,652 U.S. military members on the battlefield and 3,262 U.S. military members not on the battlefield. More than 100,000 were wounded and of the 7,000 U.S. prisoners of war, 38 percent died in captivity.

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"Before Korea, my father was a very quiet man, a very gentle man. The Korean War changed him. It was a really bad experience for him and he came home with a totally different personality. After Korea, he was someone who talked and talked and was extremely social. I did not recognize him at all.

"Back then they did not call it PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). They called it combat fatigue or shell shock, if they called it anything. When he came back from Korea, he went to Valley Forge Army Hospital (Phoenixville, Pennsylvania). To walk into this mental health facility to visit my father was really difficult." (80 percent of Korean War veterans are said to have returned from Korea with PTSD, mostly not treated or acknowledged. Multiple studies show that intense trauma can cause drastic personality changes.)

"That was a really sad time for me because I was told things about my father that I probably shouldn't have been told at that age and time. I was told that he had had a nervous breakdown, that his mother was overbearing, that his wife was overbearing and on top of that, he had two girls for children. It made me feel like it was my fault.

"The interesting thing was, my father would have periods of being back to himself. I remember, occasionally, he would take himself and check into a facility. That was part of my high school and college experiences – seeing him being okay and not okay."

Jean attended West Lafayette High School.

"I was an average student," Jean stated, "and I worked very hard to be an average student."

She also remained true to her worker bee character, as evidenced in her senior year biography. *JEAN CHAPMAN: Panorama 4, Girls' Club 1-3, Ahea Club 1-3, Executive Committee 3; Speech Arts 1-4; Pep Club 1-2, 4; Student Council 4, Secretary-Treasurer 4; SCARLET AND GRAY 3-4, Co-Editor 4; Den Board 2-3; 'Stardust' 3; Deviltries 4; Class Secretary 3; SCARLETTE 4; Invitations and Name Cards Committee 4.*

SCARLET AND GRAY is the name of the high school's yearbook. Deviltries was the group behind the high school's annual variety show. SCARLETTE was the high school's newspaper.

Following her high school graduation in 1959, Jean attended Purdue University. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Education and continued straight through, earning a Master of Science in Education the summer of 1964.

"Why become an educator? I always liked kids and I started babysitting in high school and really loved it. And hey, that's what women did. Both my sister and I became teachers. She didn't like it. I loved it.

"After I graduated, I wanted to go into the Peace Corps. It was quite new then (it formed in March of 1961). But my mother convinced me that, 'Oh, you don't want to go sleep on a dirt floor. Oh, you don't want to do this, you don't want to do that.' That was probably the only time I listened to my mother!"



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"I also really wanted to live in California. My mother wasn't for that either. But when I think back, my life would be totally different had I gone into the Peace Corps or moved then to California. So from 1964 to 1969, I taught in Westwood, Massachusetts and lived in Boston. Westwood is about 25 miles south of Boston. My sister was teaching in Boston, so that was the connection that brought me to the East Coast."

←Jean Chapman, Educator.

"The first school I taught at was a public elementary school, Pine Hill School in Westwood. I taught fifth and sixth grade. I wanted to teach fifth and sixth graders. The interesting thing was, I sent out a lot of résumés and that was the only school that wanted to hire me. Everyone else said, 'You don't have any experience.' How do you get experience? Ha! Ha! After being at Pine Hill for a year, I got all these letters saying, 'Would you like to come and work for us now that you have experience?' So I then taught at Islington School. Islington was like this new wave, experimental school in an old home in Westwood. It was crazy, crazy fun. I taught with some teachers that were very excited about doing things differently, and I really enjoyed being one of them.



Jean's first teaching assignment, Pine Hill School, Westwood, MA, 1965.

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Jean was co-renting an apartment, when her roommate gave notice that she would be leaving. Jean mentioned that to one of her fellow teachers at Pine Hill School, who in turn knew a young woman, Janice Brink, who was currently living at home but ready to move into an apartment. The two women got along great and Jean had a new roommate.

"Janice, who is gone now, was a cardiac nurse and worked in heart surgery. At some point in her career, she worked with the famous cardiologist Dr. Shumway." (One of the pre-eminent heart surgeons of his time, Dr. Shumway performed the first successful human heart transplant in the United States in 1968 at Stanford Hospital in California.)

In 1966, Janice told Jean, "My brother is returning. He hasn't been home for a really long time. Do you want to come out for dinner?" Jean agreed to go.

"Here was this gorgeous man with a full beard and a tan and adventures," Jean smiled. "And that was it."

"Born in Boston, John was the eldest of six kids," Jean continued. "His father was an efficiency person, which essentially meant he was hired by companies to improve their utility costs and functions. It was a good job. John's father was a Harvard graduate and he wanted his first-born to go to Harvard. That was the plan.

"John went to Boston Latin School (established in April of 1635 it is the oldest public school in the United States). The family moved to Westwood, and John graduated from Westwood High School. At the last moment, with John thinking he was going to go to Harvard, his parents told him, 'We don't have the money.'

"That was very upsetting to John. So in 1958, he joined the Army and was in the 101st Airborne. But as it turned out, he didn't really like that, so he transferred into the Army's Language School in Monterey, California (Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center), and learned Russian, graduating in 1959. Fluent in Russian, he was then sent over to Germany. He interrogated Russians in Germany. This was during the Cold War. He had a clearance of 'SECRET.' We used to joke with him that he was a spy and he never confirmed nor denied it. Ha! Ha! He was there just a couple of years. He did not have to wear a uniform and he liked that.

"When John got out of the U.S. Army, he went back to California, to San Francisco specifically, and began working in the computer field. He was a computer systems analyst. He was also a sailor and he went sailing a lot. In 1965, he left San Francisco by sailboat and sailed to Pago Pago, the capital of American Samoa. He worked there for a while and then he sailed to Australia. He was traveling in a 30-foot sailboat. He lived in Australia for probably six months, then he traveled by freighter through the Suez Canal and eventually came back to Boston."

On May 25, 1967, the couple married at John's parents' church in Westwood – First Parish Church of Westwood, established in 1809.

"It was one of those pretty little white churches up on a hill and we had a small wedding, just family. John's brother Joe—well his real name is Loren, we just call him Joe—was John's best man and my sister Jane was my maid of honor. I was 20 minutes late to our wedding because of the weather—it was rain, rain, rain—and when I got there, I heard John was pacing because he was worried."

It turns out that "rain" was one of the largest geomagnetic storms on record and it began on May 25, 1967, and it moved along a wide swath of areas, including coastal New England which was battered. In Boston, winds reached 70-80 miles an hour.

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"Where did we go on our honeymoon? Well, that's a bit of a story. When John was in California he had met and gotten to be friends with a boat designer and builder, Arthur Piver. Arthur was also a boat racer. Arthur decided he was going to take a racing boat to England, to do a single-handed race. Now, Arthur was very experienced and had done a lot of racing, but this was the first time he was going to do single-handed racing." (Single-handed race sailing is sailing with only one crewmember.)

←May 25, 1967: Jane, the bride and groom, and John's brother Joe.

"Originally, Arthur had asked John to go with him to England. This is before John and I were figuring out our wedding plans. I thought John would enjoy it and told him, 'We'll get married when you come back.'

But John wanted to get married and so John's brother Joe went instead and Arthur and Joe were going to take the boat over to England, right after John and I married.

"So on my honeymoon, I went with my husband and his brother to some place in New York where Arthur was waiting – and John and I waved farewell to Joe and Arthur. Unfortunately, when Joe and Arthur got to the race in England, Arthur did not have enough hours on single-boat sailing to qualify for the single-boat race. So after all that, Joe returned to Westwood and Arthur went home to Marin." (Sadly, not much later, Arthur was lost at sea heading down the California coast on one of his boats.)

Jean continued working as a teacher in Westwood and John worked as a computer systems analyst, first for Price Waterhouse and then for a greeting card company.

"John's whole idea was you worked for a company for a little while, learned everything you could and then you worked for another company that was doing something else. It kept things interesting. And early on John had this idea that he and I would build a boat and take it down to the Caribbean to charter it out for a few years."

Jean laughed.

"Now, you are talking to a girl who had never been on a sailboat but who was very willing to enjoy the adventure! I took a sailing class on the Charles River and John said, 'If you can sail a small boat, you can sail a large boat.' So John and I began building our boat in 1968. Did my mother approve of this sailing trip? Oh, not at all! How did she and John get along? Let's not go there. Ha! Ha!"

It took Jean and John one year to build the boat, and in the fall of 1969, the couple put their boat in the water. They named their boat, the Cachalot.

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Jean sits on the couple's work-of-art in progress.



Jean and John Brink's sailboat, the Cachalot, fall of 1969.

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A trimaran, the Cachalot was 41 feet in length with 22-foot beams. It had three hulls and could sleep eight. Another word for "sperm whale," a cachalot is the largest of the toothed whales and the largest tooth predator. A French word, cachalot translates to big teeth.

Both having quit their jobs, Jean and John lived on their boat for about a month in Boston and waited for the hurricane season to end.

"In the middle of October, 1969, we left. As we were going down the coast, we were dismasted. The mast just collapsed on us. Being dismasted is very dangerous and it was a little frightening. We were near Provincetown, Massachusetts (about 50-60 nautical miles from Boston), and we were there for a week while a mast-maker made us a new mast. Our mast-maker in Boston had told us, 'You don't need these special things.' Well, those 'special things' were spreaders. Spreaders are stabilizers for the mast and as it turned out, we did need them. As it was, it was like a piece of chewing gum that collapsed in the middle."

On October 30, 1969, the Brinks shared a headline in the *Cape Cod Standard-Times* with another trimaran owner.

### ***Cape-tip 'seas' double***

#### ***Trimaran built, second sails out***

*By Neil G. Nickerson*

*PROVINCETOWN – Up to last week there were none. But this week there were two trimaran vessels in the harbor with the launching of one built in Provincetown by a father and son.*

*Eldred Mowery Jr. of Provincetown, began working on his trimaran in August 1968. Aided by his son, Eldred 3d, 16, the construction has been completed.*

*Mowery's boat, and another that left several days ago – owned by John and Jean Brink of Westwood – are identical in size. Both were built from the same set of prints.*

*A trimaran is a fast pleasure sailboat with three hulls side by side.*

#### ***Last mast***

*Brink's boat put into Provincetown after it lost its high mast in a wind off Highland, after the Brinks left Boston en route to Bermuda.*

*They crept into Provincetown Harbor using emergency power to get repairs. The 44-foot-long, aluminum forward mast was installed with the aid of a winch from a fishing boat.*

*The Brinks then sailed through the Cape Cod Canal, rather than risk the ocean in brisk winds. Mowery and Mowery, and Brink became acquainted when the latter learned the Provincetown sailor was building a similar boat.*

*Brink is a former computer systems analyst, and his wife a school teacher. They built their boat in their Westwood home area, then trucked it piecemeal to Boston, put it together, and set out for Bermuda, hoping to try chartering there.*

"We left Provincetown at the end of October. First we were going to go to Bermuda. My brother-in-law, Clark, who had never done any sailing, decided to join us on our way to Bermuda. My sister was going to meet us in Bermuda and just have fun – and then John and I were going to sail to the Caribbean.

"We were out for a day or two and a storm came up. John and Clark had to be tied to the mast when they were out. They wouldn't allow me to come out on deck. I just stood in the doorway and watched these incredible waves. We all had life jackets on and we were basically surfing. After the storm, our radio did not work. We had special equipment that should have been able to tell us where our boat was and John, having done all this sailing—including he had sailed by the moon—was very experienced. But all of our navigational equipment broke in the storm, except for one thing. It had these beeps and it told us we were either northeast of Bermuda or we were southeast of Bermuda, and if we were southeast of Bermuda, we didn't want to go back to Bermuda, we wanted to go down to the Caribbean..

"We saw a ship, a Greek freighter, in the distance so we shot off our flare gun to indicate there was trouble. All we really wanted to do was find out where we were. The freighter, which was mostly empty, kept going. But then it did turn around because, the captain told us later, he had once seen someone put up a flare and he had not stopped to help them and it had always been on his mind. So he came back."

The unwritten law of the sea requires that a mariner come to the aid of a mariner in distress. Therefore, should you see a distress signal, immediate and positive action should be taken. Notify the nearest Coast Guard station or State authority by radio. However, the law is unwritten, not mandatory.

"We did everything by the book as far as where you should be located in relation to your assisting vessel, in a situation like this. What the book didn't tell us was the freighter was moving sideways as well as forward. It was a pretty rough sea and the freighter broke off the tip of the hull. That is not too much damage on a trimaran because there are three hulls and you still have two. They threw us ropes and we tied them onto our boat. We moved to where we needed to be, backwards and around the other side of the freighter. I can still see the rudder, coming up out of the water and splashing down. We were hoping they could take their booms and pull our boat onto their boat, but their booms were broken. So we got to the other side and at one point, John fell into the water. But he was okay. We all had our life preservers on.

"Because our boat could not be pulled on board, we got into our inflatable dinghy. Our sailboat was fine where it was, we just needed to get on board to talk to them. Before we got into the dinghy, John said to me, 'You know, we may not come back on this boat. So here is a yellow bag, put whatever you want in it.'

"Well, the hull that had gotten broken was where my clothes were. I'm from Indiana and I am practical. So I packed a bottle of champagne and a year's supply of birth control! Did I take my passport? No. Ha! Ha! And of course I didn't have any clothes other than what I was wearing.

"They put rope ladders down the side for the two men in my party. My husband tied a rope around me. He told me when he fell into the water, his boots had filled up quickly. So I kicked off my shoes. I've got this rope around me but I still fell into the water. I was pulled up the side of the freighter by these two really big crew members who saw me fall into the water. As soon as they got me on board, they started precautionary life saving measures – pumping my chest. I was mortified. Ha! Ha!

"What happened to our boat? Our boat was tied and as the freighter turned up their motors to leave, the ropes snapped and our boat just sat there, floating. The law of the sea is if you find a boat floating, it is all yours. We had in our boat: a wonderful supply of brand new books, new silverware, new china and all our wedding gifts. We had two queen size beds with new comforters and sheets. I had a new refrigerator and a stove. It was really nicely equipped."

**Behind the Jean E. Brink Pool name is a quiet worker bee**

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The freighter was heading to the island of St. Thomas in the Caribbean. So for several days, Jean, her husband and her brother-in-law, relaxed and enjoyed the ride. Jean wore donated clothes from the crew.

"European t-shirts are not quite the same as American t-shirts. They are cut much lower. I had to tie them up. They also gave me shirts and pants, and I had a rope belt and a pair of flip-flops that were three or four sizes too big.

"We spent several days in St. Thomas, deciding what to do. The Captain of the freighter had let the Coast Guard know that they had taken us aboard and that our sailboat was still out on the water. But the Coast Guard had their hands full. There was a freighter splitting in half and in addition, a large sailboat was in distress. The Coast Guard told the Captain, 'You saved the people. We don't care about the boat.'

"My brother-in-law headed back to his home on the East Coast. John and I did not want to go back to Westwood, because everyone thought we were crazy to begin with! At the time, Houston, TX, was a place that was really developing and we talked about that. But John had lived in San Francisco and had really liked it. As for me, I had always wanted to go to California. So we decided, yes, we'll move to California. We flew back to Boston from the Caribbean. We picked up a vacuum cleaner, and a television and some winter clothes, and we drove somebody's repossessed car from New York to Los Angeles. The good thing was, they hadn't written down the mileage. The bad thing was the car had some issues somewhere in Pennsylvania. Getting that fixed took a little extra time and then they gave us additional extra time. So instead of driving directly to Los Angeles, we drove to San Francisco. We found an apartment in San Francisco and then took the car to LA.

"The trip across the country was such a wonderful experience of decompressing after all that had happened. As a kid, I had been to Indiana and I had been to Paris, but I had no idea about this country. For some reason I remembered all these wonderful songs about the tumbleweed, and I thought oh, I just want to see the tumbleweed. And as we were driving, there was the tumbling tumbleweed! We took Route 66. We took a southern route. We went through Oklahoma and Texas and came out here.

"Our new home was at Leavenworth and Post. The biggest room in the apartment was where the Murphy bed came out of the wall. We had left Boston in the middle of October, 1969, the accident with the freighter happened on November 3, 1969 and by the 20th of November, we were living in San Francisco!



"John had a full beard and he was told that no one would hire him with a beard. So he shaved it off and got a job as a computer programmer analyst with Crown Zellerbach in San Francisco's financial district."

The couple didn't stay long at Leavenworth and Post. They found a home to rent over in Sausalito for "pennies on the dollar" and stayed for a few months until the owners returned. Then they moved back to San Francisco, to 44th and Balboa.

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"We did go sailing again. Within six months of our sailboat escapade, John got a Hobie Cat. (A Hobie Cat is a small catamaran boat with two parallel hulls of equal size). We put it on top of our car and we would go out on the Bay. Originally it freaked me out. There would be these freighters tied to the dock and I would be like, 'Don't get close!' But I got used to it. You got really wet. You sat on a canvas area that really got soaked so admittedly, it was not so much fun for me. This was before the kids came along."

The couple was living at 44th and Balboa when their daughter Laura was born in 1970. Their son Adam was born in 1973. In 1976, the Brink family moved to Pacifica and Laura started kindergarten at Pacific Manor.

"Before we moved to Pacifica, we were renting a home in Twin Peaks near Sutro Tower. My daughter was getting ready to start kindergarten and she was going to be bussed to the Mission District. We weren't sure that was what we wanted and we started looking at houses and ended up looking in Pacifica. With my husband working in downtown San Francisco, and Pacific Manor so close to the freeway, we decided that was the best area for us, particularly when we found a home that we really liked, which is the home I still live in."

Jean was a stay-at-home mom until 1977, when she started teaching at Happy Times Nursery School in San Francisco. It was then located by St. Brendan Catholic Church which is near Twin Peaks. But eventually it moved to Quintara St., right off of 19th Avenue. Jean taught there for 30 years. The school closed in 2017.

Why didn't she teach public school in California?



"They didn't want me!" she laughed. "I had a lifetime teaching credential in Indiana and a lifetime teaching credential in Massachusetts. California wanted me to go back to school. I could understand taking California history because I didn't have that. But there were a lot of things I had taken that they decided they didn't like the course descriptions. The worst part was the person I was communicating with in Sacramento never wrote down his name on a piece of paper, it was just his initials. So I couldn't communicate with him. I couldn't phone and say let me talk to Mr. So and So. My daughter had gone to Happy Times when we lived in Twin Peaks and they had an opening for a teacher and I applied and got the job. I absolutely loved that job."

←Jean and one of her students enjoy a Halloween Day at school.

"My students were three, four and four-and-a-half years old. Over the years, I have seen a number of my students as adults and I so enjoy seeing them! They always recognize me. I've had gray-white hair for a long, long time."

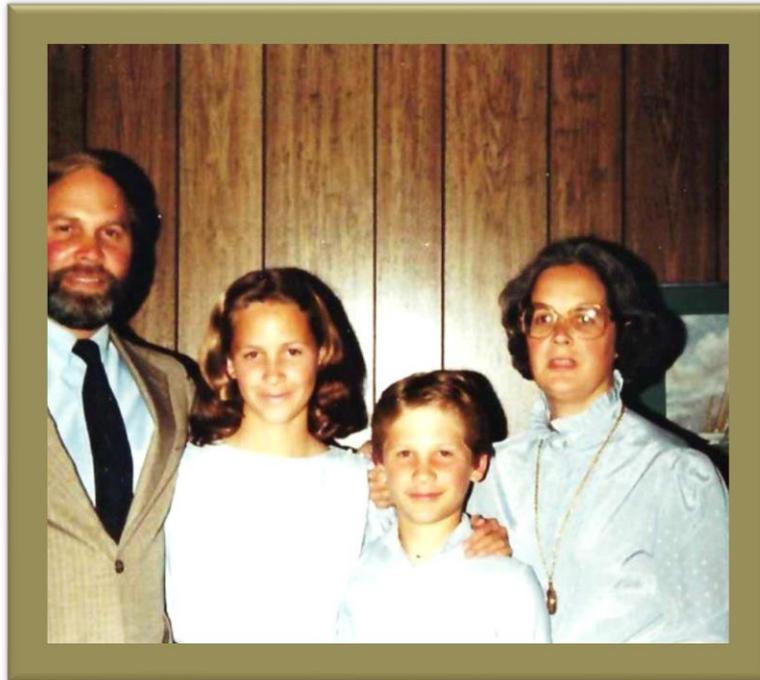
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Jean and John's children went to Pacific Manor Elementary School, where Ocean Shore Elementary School is now. They attended Sharp Park Middle School, where Ingrid B. Lacy Middle School is now, and Oceana High School. Jean was a Room Mother at Pacific Manor and a member of the School Site Council. She was in the Sharp Park PTA and served on the Oceana Scholarship and Athletic Foundation, the Oceana Booster's Club and the Oceana Parent Advisory Council. In 1988, Jean was awarded the Oceana Parent Award.



**John, Laura, Adam and Jean, circa 1983.**

In 1986, Jean's husband became disabled.

"He had a massive stroke but it didn't affect what was important to him or to us. He had to relearn everything, starting from how to brush his teeth. For several years, he couldn't even talk. But we kept our humor. We had this joke, 'Is it animal, vegetable or mineral?' But he had to decide, what was important for him to do and what wasn't. For instance, was it important to relearn colors? No. But it was important for him to become independent again.

"He loved to ride a motorcycle and that was an important goal for him to get back on a motorcycle – and he did it. He was paralyzed on the right side of his body and was unable to use his right arm, right hand or right leg. So he had a motorcycle built, with a sidecar, so that he could do everything with his left hand and the sidecar gave it balance. I rode in the sidecar once, but it was too low to the ground for me! We had to go through all kinds of hurdles with the DMV for him to get his driver's license, but he had incredible drive and he worked really hard to make it happen.

"The first time he went out on his motorcycle, I was really nervous, like the mother of a teenager who is off on their own in the car for the first time. But he told me, 'If I die today, I die happy.'

"I do have a real Pacifica story in regards to this. John used to go to Mazzetti's Bakery a lot. He would park his motorcycle and go in. One day, he went in and someone had left \$5 at Mazzetti's counter with a

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note. 'For the man who rides his motorcycle, and walks with a limp and seems to struggle when he walks and talks.' You bet he picked out what he wanted and we both really enjoyed that. It was just a sweet example of this community."

In 1988, Jean ran for the JUHSD Board of Trustees. How did this come about?

"Because of my involvement with various organizations at Oceana High School, I got a call from Al Campbell, who was then Oceana's principal. 'We would like you to run for the Board of Trustees. We think you would be good.' 'No, no,' I said. 'I am not interested.' My husband was sitting there and he asked me what I had just said 'no' to because he knew there were so many things I had said 'yes' to. I told him, and he really encouraged me to do it. So, with his encouragement, I said, 'yes.'"

"I knew nothing about elections, about campaigning," Jean laughed. But she learned.

She borrowed her daughter's slogan from when Laura ran for office in middle school. "Think Brink!" Jean placed a huge sign in the open space area near the Vallemar Station. She learned that she needed people with name recognition to endorse her. The woman who was retiring from the School Board, Ruth Boudinot, said she wouldn't endorse Jean without meeting with her.

"We went out for lunch and she grilled me. It was like I was doing a master thesis!" But Jean passed and was endorsed. She also learned she had to be endorsed by a local union. She got that done as well.



"There were three of us running for two spots. One of those was an incumbent and she was a shoe-in. The other individual running was endorsed by the *Pacifica Tribune*. When I took my ad to the *Tribune*, I had some names of people who were endorsing me. I remember the man said to me, 'I don't recognize any of these names!' I was number three in placement on the ballot, which usually means you don't win because people just check the first two. For most candidates, the most difficult part about running is you have to ask people for money. Well, I didn't want to ask and didn't, so my war chest was very small!. At the Fog Fest, I just stood quietly in the middle of the street and handed out a flyer saying who I was."

Jean went to all the candidate debates.

"I am a big believer in public schools and my daughter had just graduated from Oceana High School and my son was a student there. As it turns out, that gave me an edge because the other non-incumbent candidate had children in private schools. Still, I doubted I would win and didn't even have a party election night. I remember when our local television access channel, Pacifica Community Television, announced my win, they did so somewhat in shock. 'Oh my God,' they said. 'Jean Brink won!'"

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Jean not only won that first election to the JUHSD Board of Trustees, she won four more elections, serving a total of 20 years until she decided it was time to step down.

"Normally people are on the Board for four years, or maybe eight years, and then they run for City Council. I enjoyed it. I learned a lot. The hardest thing was when kids would come before the School Board, in a closed session, because they had done something. It was a disciplinary meeting. You had to make a decision about their future because they couldn't go back to their current school. Maybe they threatened a teacher. I remember a student who came before us and we had to make one of those difficult decisions. We decided to send him over to Thornton School for a year. We told him if he cleaned up his act, he would be able to return to his regular high school and graduate with his classmates. You feel sorry for these kids. I went to his graduation and just before he graduated, he told me that sending him to Thornton was the best thing that anyone had ever done for him. That still touches me."

Jean believed that one of the things she could consistently do while serving on the Board was support the teachers by going to their school events.

"What a wonderful time I had. There are so many talented kids and we have such a rich, cultural heritage in our schools." By the time Jean retired from the JUHSD Board in 2008, she was attending high school events in the District, almost every night of the week.

Congresswoman Jackie Speier, representative for California's 14th Congressional District, serving in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2008 through 2022, entered the following recognition into the Congressional Record on November 20, 2008.

#### **IN RECOGNITION OF JEFFERSON UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT TRUSTEE JEAN BRINK**

*"Madam Speaker, an era is coming to an end in the Jefferson Union High School District. Jean Brink, first elected in 1988, is retiring as a Trustee after 20 years of productive and selfless service. Like so many in public service, Jean first got involved as an active and concerned parent.*

*Her two children, Adam and Laura, attended the District's Oceana High School, where Jean quickly became as well-known as her son and daughter. In five straight elections, the voters of the Jefferson Union High School District returned Jean to office, relying on her level head, passionate commitment to education and keen understanding of the School District's greater role in the community. Madam Speaker, Jean is the kind of public servant that we could all take a lesson from. While overseeing the modernization of district schools and facilities and working for the passage of two bond measures, Jean remained vigilant against waste and abuse and always kept a watchful eye on the taxpayers' hard-earned money. Jean Brink earned the title "Trustee" because "trust" is what Jean is all about. As a board member, she guided the District through difficult economic times while always making sure that the needs of students were foremost on the minds of administrators. While committed to the basics, she understood that high school is one of the last times that many students have a chance to participate in artistic endeavors. She has been a strong supporter of art, music and drama programs, not just by providing financial and administrative support, but by attending nearly every band concert, school play and art show produced in the District for the last 20 years. Madam Speaker, a generation of students benefitted from Jean Brink's service. We will miss her, but she has certainly earned her retirement."*

\* \* \*

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Along with what has already been mentioned on the list of Jean Brink's community involvement, there are a few more things. She has been the volunteer statistician for Pacifica's Junior Olympics. She has been the cashier for the Pacifica Historical Society for the past 10 years. Anyone who has attended the Society's second weekend of the month (Friday and Saturday, every month but December) Rummage Sale, you have purchased, and will continue to purchase, your finds from Jean. For many years she was a volunteer with the Pacific Coast Fog Fest Parade.

"I lined up the different people and floats that were going to be in the parade. When I took the job over the first year, I remember this man said to me, 'You are not going to yell at us, are you?' 'No, no,' I assured him. 'I am not going to yell at you.' Ha! Ha! I guess the previous volunteer was worn out. In addition to that, for several years the late Marv Morganti and I did the registration for the parade. People would come to us and get their packets."

Immediately following her retirement from the School District Board in 2008, as well as her retirement from her 30-year teaching job at Happy Times Nursery School, Jean became a volunteer with the Pacifica School Volunteers.

"The mission of Pacifica School Volunteers is to support and enrich the education and well-being of children in Pacifica's public schools. The goal of the organization is to screen, recruit, train, and place volunteers in the schools, and strengthen ties between families, community, business and the schools."

For 13 and a half years, until the COVID-19 pandemic, Jean volunteered at Sunset Ridge Elementary School in the class of kindergarten/transitional kindergarten teacher May Ryan.

"I had May's son in my preschool class and I was really happy to be able to volunteer in her classroom through the Pacifica School Volunteers. I did this two days a week for several hours. I just loved those kids and they would ask me all sorts of questions. 'Why is your hair white?' 'Why do you have so many wrinkles?' 'Why is your skin so soft?' Because they liked to hold my hand. I answered all their questions. It was always my pleasure to work with them and hear what they had to say."

Perhaps Jean's most heartfelt moment was when a little boy said to her, "Miss Jean, you must be a scientist. You know so much about animals." To which a little girl responded. "No, Miss Jean is a masterpiece."

Because of her age, Jean decided she would hold off on volunteering until the COVID-19 pandemic calmed down. She admitted that she is thinking of volunteering again.

"Working with the children in May Ryan's class just made me feel good. And I must say, of all the awards I have ever received, the one that remains a particular standout is my 10-Year Award as a Pacifica School Volunteer. I think it would be nice to get a 15-Year Award!"

As far as having a swimming pool named after her, Jean laughed and said she thinks because they saw so much of her, and they needed a name, they picked hers.

The District has a number of places that are named after locals. John Madden, for instance. The football coach, NFL sports commentator and 1954 Jefferson High School graduate donated the lights for Jefferson's football field in 2002 which were subsequently named the "Madden Lights." There is Westmoor High School's Giammona Pool. That's named after former Daly City Mayor and basketball coach Tony Giammona. The library at Oceana High School is the Ruth Boudinot Library. Ruth Boudinot not only served on the JUHSD Board of Trustees, she was also a member of the Laguna Salada Union School District Board of Trustees (now the Pacifica School District).

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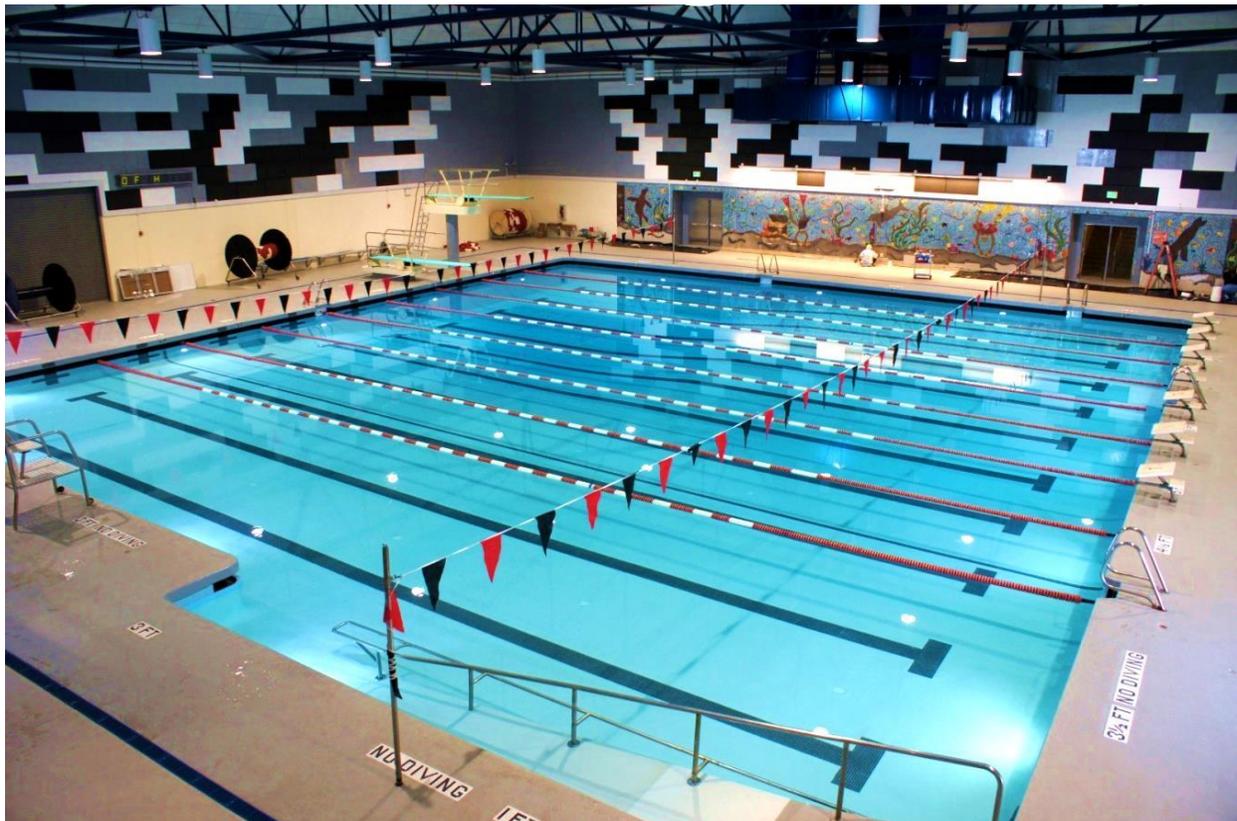
"When I started swimming at Oceana Pool in 1978, it was a great way to relax. I would go swimming after work. In order to get a "Masters" pass, you had to swim, in a lane, from one end of the pool to the other. I can do that, but I am not a master swimmer."

Her volunteer involvement with the mosaic tile wall inside the pool building at Oceana High School, was another huge help to Pacifica's PB&R Department.

"The mural was started by one of the Pacifica Sea Lions parents, and working parents so often don't have the time to dedicate to a project like this. The parents got about one-tenth of it done and then it sat there for a year. Meanwhile, Judy Balagot, who also swam at the pool, was retiring from Ingrid B. Lacy Middle School at the same time I was retiring. We discussed, that in our retirement, we would tackle the tiling project together. Had either one of us ever done any tiling? No! Well, how hard could it be?"

As anyone who has done tiling knows, tiling is work. The two retired educators—with occasional, but much appreciated help from community members—worked on it for a year and nine months. Then, due to water seeping through the ceiling, the pool renovation project was moved up a year. Protection was put over the mosaic tile wall while the pool work was done.

"I had nightmares that when they took the protection off those tiles, it would turn out that all the tiles had fallen to the floor. But they hadn't!"



Scott Leslie photo

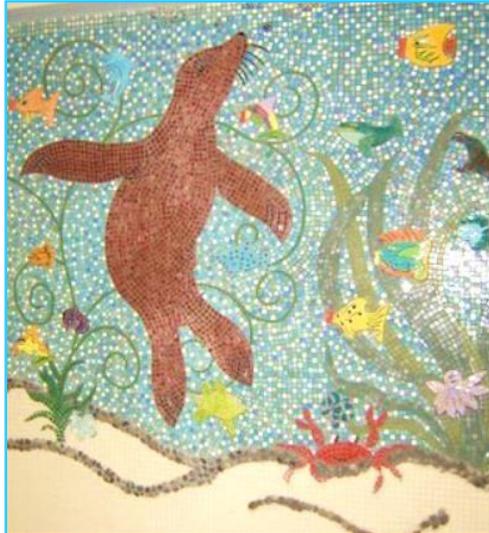
Opening day at the Jean E. Brink Pool, August 28, 2010, with the Pacifica Sea Lions mosaic project in the background.

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This sea lion represents some of Jean's poolside handiwork.

But it wasn't all volunteer work in her community.

"After John and I became empty nesters, we traveled. He surprised me with an RV and we traveled up and down the coast of California and into Oregon. We also went to Zion National Park, the Boulder Dam and the Grand Canyon. We spent a lot of time in Arizona and New Mexico. It was a great way to see different parts of the country."

There have been some other adventures as well, including when Jean and her daughter Laura parasailed in Maui, the summer of 2007.



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In May of 2022, Jean and John celebrated their 55th anniversary. On June 20, 2022, at the age of 82, John Theodore Brink II passed away peacefully. He was remembered for his passion for all of his favorite hobbies: reading, motorcycles, sailing and computers.



**In 2017, John and Jean Brink, the boy from Boston, MA, and the girl from Delphi, IN, enjoyed a 50th anniversary party in San Mateo, California.**

Jean Brink, the proud grandmother of three—Serena Ritenour, Avery Brink and Tyler Brink—has a schedule that remains pretty packed, and it includes: visits with her children and grandchildren; visits with friends, including some going back to high school; swimming, of course; and volunteering, always.

"I just think volunteering is a great way to give back and as far as I am concerned, you always learn something, you meet wonderful people, it's great fun and it is really needed."



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.

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