

Half Staff – Virginia W. LaPlante

June 28, 2019



Brookline, MA – Virginia W. LaPlante, 88, of Brookline and Rockport, Massachusetts, died peacefully at her home in Brookline, on June 28, 2019. A book editor specializing in the behavioral sciences, she spent most of her career at Harvard University Press. She edited its top bestseller, *In A Different Voice*, a study of women’s psychology by Carol Gilligan that was translated into 17 languages. LaPlante’s other authors included Anna Freud, Helen Vendler, Judith Herman (*Father-Daughter Incest and Trauma and Recovery*), civil rights attorney Arthur Kinoy (*Rights on Trial*), pathologist Guido Majno (*The Healing Hand*), and therapist Terrence Real (*I Don’t Want To Talk About It*).

“Virginia was a dream editor,” said Dr. Herman, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

“Somehow, whatever you wrote, it came back so much clearer after she edited it, and you thought, ‘Oh, that’s what I wanted to say.’ Virginia didn’t impose her point of view; she helped you say what you wanted to say more clearly and elegantly.”

LaPlante retired from Harvard Press in 1988. For the next three decades she continued as a freelancer to edit fiction and nonfiction by many authors including her daughter, Eve LaPlante.

A lifelong activist, LaPlante had a passion for public service. In 1971 she was elected to Brookline’s Town Meeting, in which she served until her death. She served on the town’s Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen for 12 years. She was a founding and board member of Jobs with Peace. In 2011 the peace group PAX honored her and her late husband Carl Dreyfus with its Ethel Halperin Lifetime Achievement Award.

Born in Pittsburgh in 1930, LaPlante was the youngest daughter of Philip J. Wilson Jr., a chemical engineer, and Virginia E. Wilson. LaPlante grew up in Pittsburgh, attended Bennington College on a full scholarship, graduating in 1952, and began her career in Boston, at Beacon Press. In 1953 she married Joseph A. LaPlante Jr., of Salem, with whom she moved to Hartford, Connecticut, when he began teaching at the University of Connecticut School of Law. They had a daughter in 1958 and divorced in 1962.

LaPlante was married to Carl Dreyfus Jr., a Boston insurance agent, from 1974 until his death, in 2010. An avid tennis player, LaPlante spend many summers in Rockport, where she and her husband could often be seen on the public courts.

In addition to her daughter, LaPlante is survived by her son-in-law, David Dorfman; step-sons Peter, Andrew, and Tony Dreyfus; grandchildren Rose LaPlante, Clara Dorfman, Charlotte LaPlante, and Philip Dorfman; and many step-grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She was

predeceased by her sisters, Phoebe Hoss and Judith Fouser; and two step-children, Sylvia and Nicholas Dreyfus.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, August 3, at 11 a.m., at the First Parish in Brookline, 382 Walnut Street, Brookline, Massachusetts, followed by a reception.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Condolences can be sent to 42 Welland Road, Brookline, MA 02245.