

Mavis Cain Obituary

Mavis B. Cain, née Collins, a pioneering advertising executive in New York City and the long-standing President of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, died at her home in Dobbs Ferry, NY, on August 23, 2024, at the age of 96, surrounded by family and friends.



Mavis graduated with a B.A. from McGill University in Montréal in 1949, earning the Governor General's Gold Medal for the highest academic standing in modern languages. She went on to do graduate work at the University of Zurich in 1950.

Mavis worked from the 1950's through 1988 at the advertising firms of J. Walter Thompson (now VML), SSC&B, as a writer and later as a vice president at Lintas: Worldwide. She handled crucial accounts for Unilever and Johnson & Johnson where she was the creator of the well-known Johnson's baby shampoo campaign featuring a young Brooke Shields, an ALL detergent campaign featuring Lily Tomlin, and Mop and Glo's campaign with Betty White, among many other projects. While at Lintas: Worldwide she worked at their offices in N.Y., London, Hamburg, Brussels and Istanbul. Her generous professional mentorship launched the careers of many young people.

Mavis was a lifelong feminist, peace activist and supporter of the Democratic Party. In 1978, she attended a White House reception hosted by First Lady, Roslynn Carter honoring women who had been pivotal in support of women's rights.

Mavis leaves a legacy of regional leadership which continues to serve the public good. She was a founding member of the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct (The Friends), serving as the organization's President from 2003-2024. Mavis spearheaded the funding effort to restore the Keeper's House and turn it into an education center for the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park in Dobbs Ferry. She was beloved by residents of all ages for her house parties, for leading aqueduct tours and her handwritten thank-you notes. But mostly it was her hands-on leadership – whether fundraising or bagging trail garbage - that drew people in. Mavis cultivated and inspired a generation of volunteers. During her time as President, The Friends was also dedicated to the restoration of the Bronx High Bridge through tireless collaboration with the local and State partners. In 2020, she was inducted into Westchester County's Senior Hall of Fame and December 4th was declared "Mavis Cain Day". As the Friends' Vice President, Robert Kornfeld noted, "I have known Mavis for thirty years and she has been a fixture of our lives. In the long run, the best tribute is to carry on protecting and advocating on behalf of the Aqueduct. She set an incredible example for the rest of us."

In her personal life, Mavis had an "open door" policy of offering friendship, food, and a room to a host of people who remained loyally connected with her over the years. She was an on-site mother and grandmother to many young people in need of love, guidance and support; always ready to help with French homework, or gentle editing of school essays and applications. Mavis was a genius at making friends and keeping them through generosity of spirit and constant attention to staying in touch, introducing people, and gathering new and old friends alike together at frequent dinners at her home and in her beloved garden. She loved to travel and did numerous house exchanges in Europe with family and friends.

An avid skier, she adored challenging slopes in the Canadian Laurentians, the Alps and Canadian Rockies. She continued to cross-country ski on the Old Croton Aqueduct and in the Laurentians in Quebec through 2023, at age 95.

Born in 1928 in Ottawa, Canada, to British immigrant parents, she lived her adult life in the New York area. Her marriage to William W. Cain ended in divorce in 1984. She is survived by four children, Hilary, Niall and Collin Cain and Julian Wheeler, nine grandchildren, and many friends locally and internationally.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her name can be made to the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, P.O. Box 182, Hasting on Hudson, New York 101706.

A memorial service will take place on Saturday October 26th, at 11:00 AM, at the Zion Episcopal Church, 55 Cedar Street, Dobbs Ferry NY.

