

PRIME TIME

Sharing a love of Loudoun's past, present and future

Jean Brown's rural advocacy serves as a model to others

BY KAREN GRAHAM

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As Jean Brown walks around the 200-acre farm in Lincoln, where she and her husband Bill raised their daughter, Sara, she proudly points to their recently restored bank barn, which dates to pre-Civil War times.

"I fell in love with the barn before I fell in love with Bill Brown," she says with a laugh.

Jean's comment is indicative of her love of rural Loudoun County and the passion she has put into many years of volunteerism and conservation projects.

Jean, 82, met Bill — who served as Parliamentarian in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1974 to 1994 — at an Alabama State Society event in Washington, D.C. Jean moved to Washington, D.C. from Alabama to work for her representative on Capitol Hill around 1960.



Times-Mirror/Nathaniel Cline

Jean Brown and her daughter Sara at their farm in Lincoln.

They married in 1971 and moved to Oakland Green Farm — to become the 8th generation on Bill's side of the family to live there. Their family history runs deep on the farm — and they still have the original 1741 Fairfax deed from Thomas Lord Fairfax to Richard Brown to prove it.

According to a story passed down

through the family, it is somewhat by chance that Jean's beloved barn was left standing and not burned down by Union soldiers during the Civil War.

Based on information from a Civil War chronology of Loudoun County, in August 1864 Union soldiers were ordered to retaliate against Gen. John Mosby's raids.

They were told to "seize Loudoun crops, animals, slaves and all men under 50, burn fields and barns."

As the story has been told in the Brown family, William Brown was standing at Oakland Green Farm watching fires burn on surrounding farms. He spotted a hawk flying around his chickens and called his son to come and shoot the hawk. At the same time, two Union soldiers, who were on their way to burn down their barn, heard the shots — and thinking the farm was being protected — they turned away.

After a recent and lengthy project to restore the barn by Loudoun-based stone mason Allen Cochran, Jean says the restoration of the barn was one of "my proudest accomplishments."

"I'm trying to preserve our rural heritage," Jean said.

Restoration and care of the farm has always been a priority for Jean and Bill. They deconstructed one of the home's first buildings — a log cabin — which they rebuilt log by log.

Other projects and upkeep continued throughout the years. Jean now lives in

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a cottage she built on the property so her daughter and family can live in the main house and run the farm and bed and breakfast business. Bill passed away in 2001.

The land has been farmed over generations and that continues to this day as portions of the land are leased to the county's last remaining dairy farm owned by the Potts family. Jean's two grandchildren — the 10th generation to live on the farm — are involved with Loudoun County 4-H and she hopes the legacy of farming at Oakland Green will continue for many years.

Jean's daughter, Sara, describes her mom as "tenacious, passionate and nice, loving, caring and kind."

She says her mom inspired her by the successes she's had in cultivating policy and procedure that preserves and protects Loudoun history, tradition and culture.

"Also the constant assault on the same motivates me to work in her long shadow toward the same goals," Sara said.

As the 9th generation to live at Oakland, she says she was not driven in another direction.

"Here I am. I hope in 20 years I'm still sort enough to be doing basically the same thing. Hannah or William may need to do some of the heavy lifting at that point but perhaps they will have fallen back here by there. I do not wish to pressure them to continue the tradition at the farm but I hope to have instilled values that natu-

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**LOUDOUN RESIDENT
ALTA JONES,
SPEAKING ABOUT JEAN BROWN**

rally lead them back in this direction. It's unique and worth holding on to. But they have to want to," Sara said.

The family's B&B business began in the 1980s, when Jean opened part of the home as a way to "earn extra money," share the history of the farm with visitors and provide a special place for events, weddings and teas.

Jean helped launch the Loudoun County B&B guild in 2004 — which now has about 30 members who serve as advocates for each other, whether it be to promote each other's businesses or to provide a collective voice on regulatory changes at the state or county level.

Amy Marasco, who is involved with the organization and owns Fieldstone Farm B&B in Hillsboro, said the guild has been "invaluable" for training, keeping

current on regulatory issues, networking and marketing.

"We are a group of people who really understand what it's like to be an inn keeper and we refer guests to each other," Marasco said.

"With Jean as a founding member and catalyst for the organization we all value her history and the legacy, heritage, but she is also very politically astute and wise. I value her ability to be a clarifying sounding board for the guild. She has very good judgement with wise advice — and she is also fun with a good sense of humor," Marasco said.

The guild has established an annual scholarship through the Visit Loudoun Foundation to honor Jean for her work in being a founding member and steering the organization.

"We are committed to do it every year to inspire the next generation entering the hospitality industry," Marasco said.

Jean's passion for Loudoun County and interest in rural conservation led her to serve on numerous organizations and boards over the years, including placing the 200-acre farm in conservation easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

She twice ran for the 33rd district in the Virginia House of Delegates in 1991 and 1993, but lost two close races — one against Del. Linda Wallace and the second against Del. Joy May.

Jean was a gubernatorial appointee to the Virginia Agriculture Council. She also helped establish the Goose Creek Historic

and Cultural Conservation District which placed more than 11,000 acres on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Jean has served on the County Historic District Review Committee and the Rural Economic Development Committee which works to protect and encourage small rural businesses. She has been involved with the Loudoun Hospital Ladies Board and the Advisory Board of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters.

She has also served on the Board of Directors of the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Advisory Board of Scenic Virginia and is currently a member of the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition.

Jean's legacy in Loudoun has not gone unnoticed by many who have worked with her over the years.

Pamela Baldwin, who along with her late husband Malcom, have been leading advocates in the conservation of rural Loudoun, said, "Jean is very civic minded and has given a lot to the community. She has been a pillar of every organization she has been involved in and has contributed enormously to each one. She has a wealth of information about Loudoun County."

Alta Jones, who served as chair of the Rural Economic and Development Committee for Loudoun County, said she met Jean through their work together on rural conservation issues. She describes Jean as "smart, feisty and tenacious."

"I have never seen such dedication to make sure her voice was heard. She is persistent and tenacious. If she thinks her opinion is not being heard she will make sure it is. I really enjoyed working with her on the policy committee. She did it through knee surgery, hip surgery and a brain tumor. She knows the history and she takes being involved very seriously. It is a lesson to younger people who don't know how to get involved — and she is a role model," Jones said.