



Harriet Keyserling's photo in Facebook

## Harriet Keyserling dies

Beaufort's political matriarch, Harriet Keyserling, died Friday evening, December 10. She was 88 and had been in hospital intensive care following knee surgery earlier this month.

Until retiring from elected political office in 1993, Keyserling served as Beaufort's state representative for 16 years, preceded by service in the mid-1970s as Beaufort county council's first female member. A committed liberal Democrat, she continued behind the scenes to be an influential force in local and statewide politics until the end of her life.

She led in promoting better public education, enhanced cultural opportunities, and shut-down of nuclear waste storage in South Carolina. After retirement from elective office in 1993 she chronicled her political life in "Against the Tide: One Woman's Political Struggle", an autobiographical description of her journey as a liberal Yankee in the world of good-old-boy conservative Southerners.

Harriet Keyserling was born 1922 in New York City and was graduated 1943 from Barnard College with an economics degree. She fell in love with a young doctor from the South, Herbert Keyserling, Jewish like herself, and married him in 1944. He moved her from the big city to his tiny country hometown of Beaufort, in which she lived the rest of her life.

Herbert and Harriet Keyserling became mainstays of the Beaufort community with Herbert for decades delivering more babies than any other doctor here. After giving birth to four children—Judy, Billy, Beth and Paul—Harriet threw herself into local cultural affairs, then morphed into an energetic and outspoken local and statewide political force. Her son, Billy Keyserling, currently serves as Beaufort's mayor.

She never forgot her New York City roots and reminded locals often of the sacrifices she made to adjust to small-town Southern ways. To fill the gap in the town's cultural life, she co-founded in the late 1940s Beaufort's Community Concert Series, which brought soprano Marion Anderson, pianist William Kappel and many other world-famous musical artists here. For decades she hosted Saturday-evening dinners at her home overlooking Battery Creek, where sophisticated conversation by Harriet

and her guests was mingled with humorous jokes told by her self-effacing physician husband, who predeceased her.

Both Harriet and Herbert Keyserling were beloved members of the Beaufort community. Having arrived here from New York City as a young bride, kicking and screaming against her preconceptions of the South, she proceeded to inform the community with loving and liberal thought, bringing enlightenment and opportunities of the outside world to the people who populated this island place in the years just after a bridge was built from the mainland. It can truly be said she changed Beaufort more than Beaufort changed her.

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