

Driving Miss Daisy:

My Friendship With JoAnn Goldstein

By Jeff Chapman October 17, 2025 The Manhattan Mercury



Photo taken at the dedication of the WW2 Memorial at K-State, “Tags of Honor” by my uncle, Tim Chapman of Manhattan.

“Hello, this is JoAnn Goldstein and I, ... well, I need your help.”

About 15 years ago while commuting between Manhattan and Salina on I-70, I got this call from Mrs. Goldstein. It was the beginning of a fun and adoring friendship.

JoAnn had just lost her husband Jack and was reaching out to see if I could help her continue her social life. I was a little taken aback, because most of my prior interactions with Mrs. Goldstein were when she was with Jack or related to something in business or fundraising. She had reached out to me before when her mom and then Jack were considering moving to Meadowlark Hills, a retirement community, where I was working at that time.

“You were so nice and helpful to me during those difficult decisions and so that is why I am calling you today” she said. “I trust you and I think you know most of my friends.”

I assumed that she was now also considering that move and so I was preparing to answer down that path when she said “I need a driver. I like to attend dinners, events, and parties and don’t drive at night. I might want to have a cocktail or wine and don’t want to drive home. Will you be my driver occasionally? I will even pay you.”

I laughed, she laughed and I said, “I would be honored, but I won’t accept a penny.”

She asked me what kind of a car I drove, “A black Lincoln.” She seemed ok with it, and she started with her first event upcoming details which would be my trial run.

Accepting this responsibility was more than just arranging a calendar, it was a logistical challenge. I worked full time in Salina at Kansas Wesleyan University and was commuting from Manhattan, so being able to get on the road to pick JoAnn up on time made me very efficient on the highway. The first event (I promise I won’t talk about all of them) was a dinner party with her friends at the Manhattan Country Club. I picked her up, petted Jazzy the dog, helped her into my car and away we went. Pulled up to the portico, let her out. Walked her to the door and then went to my car to park and waited in the coat room until she was done with dinner. As she and her friends emerged, I greeted them all and one asked, “Why didn’t you join us for dinner?” I responded, “Oh I am just the driver,” but on the way to JoAnn’s home, she discussed that she and her friends would like me to join her next time and that it was silly for me to wait outside. She also said, “Stop calling me Mrs. Goldstein. I am JoAnn to you.” I was honored as her friends were people I had admired; the Levins, Wefalds, Krauses, Snyders, Sinks, and many other town leaders, most of whom were forever Manhattanites.

From that moment forward I took JoAnn to hundreds of events over the span of about ten years. She added me to the guest list, offered me tickets to attend, which included the night she was honored by the Manhattan Community Foundation, or dinner at the KSU President’s home, front tables at the Landon Lectures and getting to watch football games on chilly days from her suite, even dancing at the military ball. In fact, because of her, I was able to meet Jim Leher and after that conversation and an idea from him I was inspired to publish a cartoon book, which will come out this winter.

While all of those moments and interactions with people who did a lot for Manhattan and K-State were incredibly awesome, my favorite times were the car rides, the conversation in JoAnn’s living room, our 30-minute chats on the phone.

She was hilarious. Her sense of humor and mine really jelled and we spent most of the time laughing at each other and at our own expense. After a while I noticed that she was attending less events, but I was still just hanging out with her to watch a movie or a basketball game on tv. I visited her in her home in Arizona a few times too. We even watch “Driving Miss Daisy” together one time and after that she would refer to herself as Miss Daisy when she climbed into my car.

Over time we realized we had so many common acquaintances and she once said she sometimes thought I was about 80 years old because I knew so many people. I even knew

her first husband's family quite well too. So, we definitely had a real friendship and enough to talk about to make it seem like time went by too fast.

We would enter an occasion, and people would joke that we were dating or that I always "seemed to be around" when JoAnn was, but we both thought it was funny and thought nothing of it.

She started losing her friends as they aged and it was hard on her. She would always be so grateful for the listening, comforting words and especially laughter and friendly conversation. I don't recall a moment when she didn't mention her love of Jack. She loved Manhattan too. So many high school stories, college-age days, and her kids, and the country club days. And...Lots of golf.

She liked her steak rare, her whiskey on the rocks, and she had a raspy smokers voice. Ok technically she liked her steak well-done, but I made fun of her about it and so she tried a few bites of my rare steak once and she thought it was "delicious." She also said that it would probably make her fat.

She was so incredibly generous. She once said she enjoyed giving financial support more than anything and she was happy that I never asked. Many people thought that since I was in fundraising, I was just hanging around her for a contribution, but only once did she make a gift to one of my causes to my memory. She asked me what I was working on and said, "I will send you a check if you send me information." It was extremely kind of her to do that.

I helped several would be fund seekers over the years learn that they were offending her by mispronouncing her name, misspelling it or not asking for the right things. She even had me look over some proposals with her to get my opinion on things she could support. She always wanted to make a significant impact; she didn't like to give a lot of places small gifts. I never influenced her giving, I helped her walk through and talk through what made her feel the best, so she knew she was getting the best satisfaction out of those contributions.

As JoAnn's health began to be a challenge and she was getting out less and less, I stopped driving her places and being her plus 1. I also moved to Kansas City, though I made it back a few times anyway, but it just kinda ended. It's now been about since covid that we went to an event and so we just sent each other birthday wishes through calls and cards instead or I might pop into her suite at a football game to say hello. I was already missing the JoAnn that was so much fun to chat with, to laugh with, to support on those sad days and to show up with as her "escort/driver" so it's with bittersweetness that I am happy she is no longer in pain and is now with Jack, the love of her life. But I sure do miss my dear friend, JoAnn.

https://themercury.com/opinion/driving-miss-daisy-my-friendship-with-joann-goldstein/article_09bcad59-7561-4725-a190-5fe7b5faccad.html