

Landonia Richards Gettell



Landonia Richards Gettell, age 99, died at home peacefully on February 4, 2018 in Palo Alto, California. The daughter of the late Harrison and Landonia (Brock) Richards, she was born on June 16, 1918, in Washington, D.C. In 1948, she married Richard Glenn Gettell, an economist at Time, Inc., who was President of Mount Holyoke College in S. Hadley, Massachusetts, from 1957 until 1968. As First Lady of the college, Landonia was recognized for her intellectual curiosity, her interest in athletics, and her extraordinary conversational skills. She earned an M.A. in philosophy from Mt. Holyoke College in 1965. After his retirement, the Gettells moved to Ladera, California; five years after Dick's death in 1988, Landonia moved to Webster House in Palo Alto.

Landonia's father, a West Point graduate, was in the US Army Air Corps. As a result, the family lived in Wyoming; the Presidio in San Francisco; Montgomery, Alabama; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and San Antonio, Texas. Landonia graduated from high school in San Antonio in 1935. She earned a B.A from Vassar College in 1939.

She was married from 1940 to 1944 to William Strathem. They lived in Manila, Arizona, Colorado, and Idaho. After her divorce, Landonia worked in New York City, as a researcher and secretary for Harland Manchester, a science writer, and for Readers Digest. Landonia's father was captured on Bataan and held as a prisoner-of-war until the summer of 1945. When he returned to the US, he invited his daughter to accompany him on a horseback ride from Front Royal, Virginia, to San Antonio, Texas, an adventure that lasted from September 1946 until February 1947. After this, Landonia returned to her position in New York City.

Mrs. Gettell was predeceased by her brother Harrison. Survivors include three nephews and their wives, Robert and Patricia Huggins of Stanford, CA; David and Julie Huggins of Fountain Hills, AZ; and William and Deborah Richards of Albuquerque, NM.

Source: The Neptune Society of Northern California.

Posted: January 2025.