

Today we are remembering Katherine Lodge. First of all, nobody called her Katherine. Most people on Nantucket simply referred to her as “Mrs. Lodge,” probably out of respect for the legendary New England family name which she assumed when she married John Lodge. We got to know her by the nickname “Tatina” or Tina for short.

For as long as locals can remember, and well before our time on the Island, the Lodges owned 94 Main Street. You all know the house. It was built at the zenith of the Whaling Era and it is among the most photographed homes on Nantucket. The house has a grand porch behind the imposing Corinthian columns where Mrs. Lodge surveyed the comings and goings on Main Street for 50 years. Her husband John would “manicure” the privet hedge out front and was inclined to engage in conversations with familiar passers by. It was all very “proper” in a throwback New England way.

A number of years ago, in the off-season, John departed this life. The next summer as I passed her home Mrs. Lodge was at her usual post, sitting on the porch in her white wicker rocker with the green striped cushions. I made my polite wave. Then something extraordinary happened. She invited me to join her up on the porch, which of course I did. Since that time there was hardly a walk to town when I didn’t stop for a conversation. We became quite good friends.

I would joke that it took me 20 years to be invited on to her porch, but only one more to be invited to her bedroom ... on a tour of the house. That would always make her laugh. She appreciated my quirky humor.

I called her the "Mayor of Main Street." She was the keeper of the unabridged history of Main Street. It wasn’t just that she knew the facts and figures about every house up and down the street. She knew all the people, their stories and their back-stories. She was a bounty of fascinating information. But she wasn’t catty about telling these stories, just matter of fact. She didn’t crave stature or recognition - which made her part of a bygone era on Nantucket.

So, how would I describe Tatina in a few words? Kind. Smart. Refined. Generous. And a little shy, if truth be told. She was intuitively a sharp judge of character. And she didn't suffer fools.

Her own story was full of surprises. For example, I only learned by reading her obituary that she was the descendant of *three* signers of the Declaration on Independence. You would think that something like that *might* come up in conversation. Especially if your birthday was July 5th.

One evening she heard through her upstairs window a walking tour guide describe the owner of 94 Main as "the last vestige of Civil War history on the Island." She was initially put off by that. I convinced her it should be a matter of family pride. You see, her own maiden name, Sherman, was as iconic as any in America. She was the great, great, grand niece of William Tecumseh Sherman the famous Union general (noted for saying about the Presidency, “I will not accept if nominated, and will not serve if elected.”) Of course, I asked if she had ever been to Atlanta. She said “no, “ and then continued, as only she could, “and I rather think I’ll never be invited.”

As a young girl Tatina lived in Venezuela where her father headed up operations for Gulf Oil. This became particularly important when so much petroleum was required for the war effort. She was the only person I've ever known to fly as a passenger on the famous Pan Am Clippers – unusual airplanes that provided first-class, hotel-like accommodations for about 20 passengers over the longest distances of the times. For those of you who have ever flown into the Marine Terminal at LaGuardia, there is an exhibit there about these odd-looking planes which actually landed on water and then tied up.

As we know, Tina was a dedicated architectural preservationist – owning and maintaining what many believe is one of the most important private homes in America. She was serious about it. Talk about stewardship. Last year she paid \$8000 to have her house hand washed when the Town reneged on their promise to clean off the thick film of bluestone dust after street repairs. She was revered by the old-school Island building tradesmen for two reasons: 1) she always aimed to do things correctly and in the best interest of her house and, 2) she paid her bills promptly.

I know she would want me to thank all of you who extended your kindness to her over the years. She was very appreciative of good company, dinners out, rides to events and those of us who loved her home as much as she did.

In March I had to visit the Island to inspect some construction at our house on Milk Street. But our water wasn't on. So Tina insisted that I stay with her. When I got to the door at 94 Main there was a note that informed me that she had checked herself into the hospital – but that the front door was unlocked and all her keys were on the kitchen table. Fortunately, she was soon released and back at home. When I next spoke with her by phone she informed me that since buying the house in 1963, other than John or herself, I was the only person who had slept in the house alone. I'll report that the house wasn't haunted that night. But I suspect that it may be now.

As happens when someone of Christian faith leaves this world, many of us are comforted by the notion that “Tatina is now in a better place.” If she were here right now, she'd be grabbing my forearm and leaning toward my ear. Then in a *whisper*, just loud enough for everyone in the room to hear her quite clearly she would say, “There is no better place than Nantucket.”

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June 23, 2014