

Remembering Sylvia and Bill Brockner

Melissa Leasia. November 1, 2021 :

Thank you to Kathi LaTourrette for sharing this lovely tribute with us.

Everyone who knew Sylvia and Bill Brockner had stories about how generous they were with their time and how they were always eager and willing to share the wonder of our natural world. I am just going to share a little bit about my family's story.

On October 15, 1977, our family moved to Evergreen from Cary, Illinois. Prior to moving here, I subscribed to the Canyon Courier to get a feel for our new community and to learn what activities were offered for families. They ranged from Tumble Bugs at the Rec Center, to pinecone wreath-making class at Hiwan Homestead and story hour at the library, but it was Sylvia's column, "Our Evergreen World," that truly delighted me.

A friend in Illinois had introduced us to birding and we were excited to learn about the birds that we would see in Colorado. The beautiful Mountain Bluebird was of particular interest to us. My then 3-year-old son, TenEyck, helped pen a letter to Sylvia asking how could we get these brilliant bluebirds to come to our house. We mailed the letter to Sylvia, care of the Canyon Courier and we were all thrilled when she wrote back to TenEyck. That was the beginning of our 44-year friendship.



Happy 91st Birthday, Bill!



Happy 90th Birthday, Bill!



Tree trimming and roasted marshmallows.



Bill and Sylvia Brockner



• Sylvia hanging a pine cone bird feeder at the once annual holiday event.



• Sylvia, TenEyck and Tenille at the annual tree trimming for the birds event.

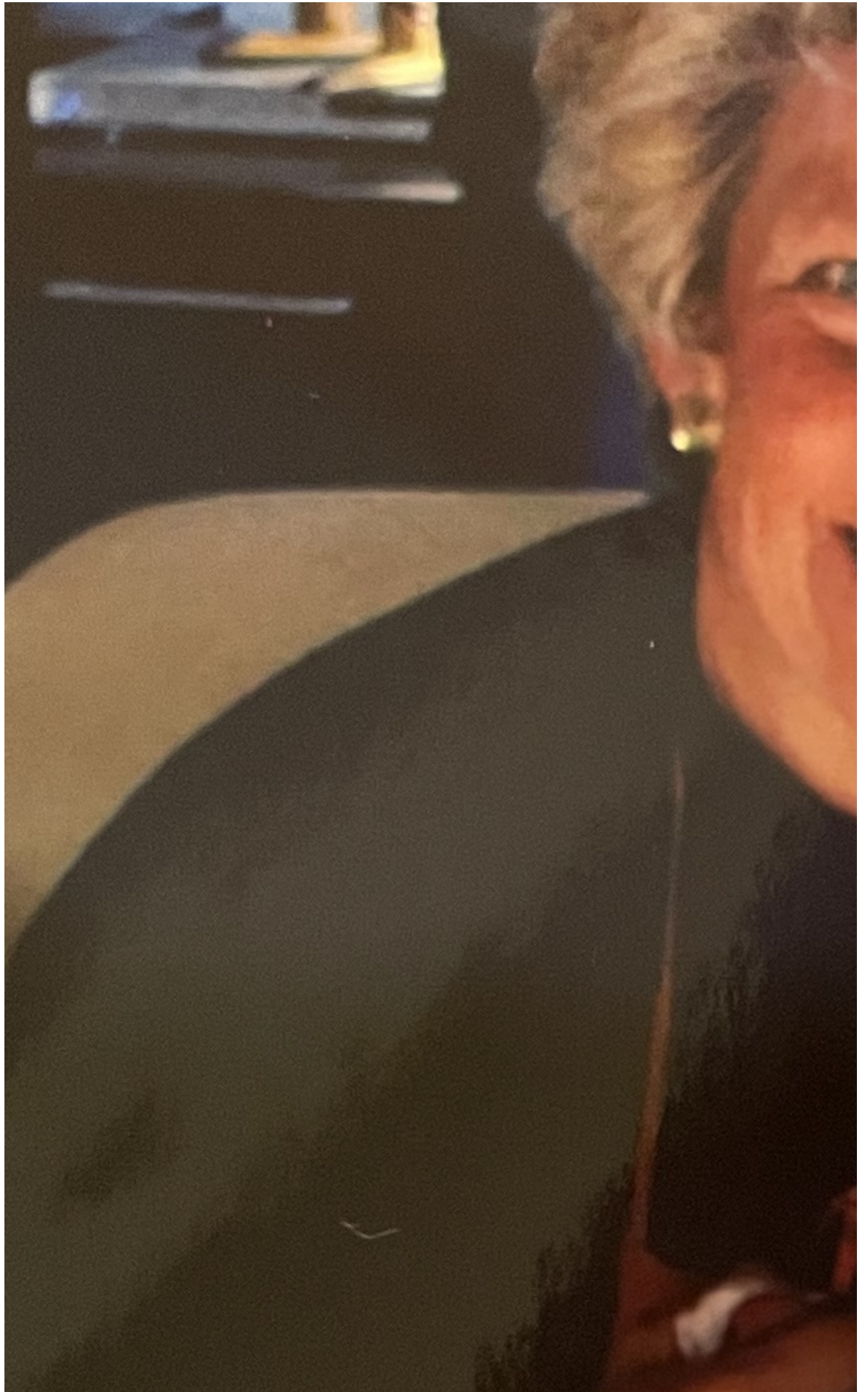


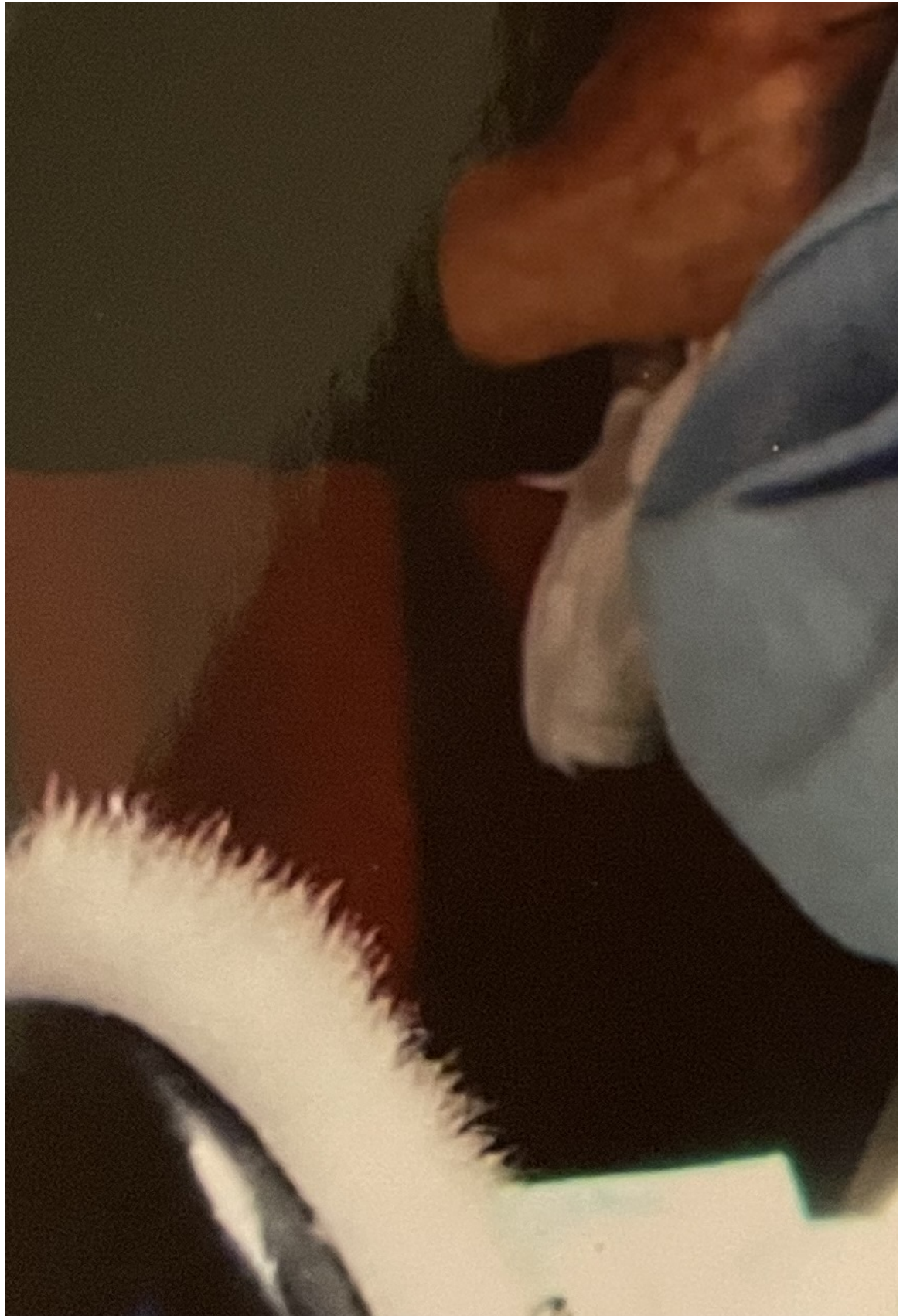
Loie, Sylvia and Kathi



Sylvia with a one of her many avian friends.







•
Kathi, Bill and Loie



•
Happy 60th Anniversary, Bill and Sylvia!



• Happy 60th Anniversary to the Brockners!



An outing with the Brockners

What I so appreciated and loved about Sylvia, and Bill, too, was that there wasn't a question too simple or an observation too common that they weren't delighted to hear about it. Sylvia enriched our lives, and especially the lives of our children, through her column in the paper and all the activities she led, from birding expeditions to wildflower hikes. We were all so fortunate to have the Brockners as our friends and neighbors in Evergreen..

Sylvia was exceptionally generous about sharing her knowledge. I remember attending her Wildflower Identification classes and delightful wildflower walks she led. Sylvia produced coloring books that she freely shared with children of all ages (editor's note: we still have her original drawings and use them at the Nature Center and in other children's programming). Sylvia shared her love of birds and nature with classrooms and youth groups throughout the area, including my daughter, Tenille's 4th grade class at Marshdale School, and Tenille's Girl Scout troop. In fact, thanks to Sylvia, the girls in Tenille's troop earned their nature merit badges and, I suspect, became life-long nature lovers. Sylvia spearheaded a particular favorite event of ours, the annual Evergreen Audubon tree trimming party. Not your usual tree trimming, this one, held at the library, was for the birds. Families brought edible ornaments and hung them on the chosen trees. After laying out this wonderful feast for the birds, there would be hot cocoa and roasted marshmallows for all. It was a beloved Evergreen tradition thanks to the Brockners.

Speaking of ornaments, Sylvia was an amazing craftsperson. She was always doing or making something-knitting crocheting, sewing, and other crafts. We have wonderful reminders of her artistic skills in our home as I'm sure many of you do. To this day, our favorite Christmas decorations are the ones that Sylvia made.

I always loved hearing Bill and Syl stories. They loved to tell about how they communicated by letter during WW II, sharing bird and nature observations with each other across wide oceans. The letters often arrived with multiple holes cut in them, leading Sylvia to guess that the censors thought their observations could be secret codes. Sixty-plus years later, in 2004, TenEyck served in Iraq as an F-16 pilot with the Colorado Air National Guard. When he left, Bill and Syl gave him a book about a WW II fighter pilot who spent his time off birding through the Pacific theater. When TenEyck saw Blue Cheeked-bee Eaters and Barn Owls in Iraq, he would ask me to share the observation with Bill and Syl. When he was amazed to see a flock of birds flying over Afghanistan at 19,000, he e-mailed saying, "Ask Sylvia what birds would be flying over Afghanistan at 19,000 feet." Sylvia needed no other details. She suspected that TenEyck had seen cranes or storks. The boy who was once 3 years old and delighted by bluebirds was a grown man flying fighter jets on the other side of the world, still intrigued by birds, and still eager to share his sighting with his life-long mentor.

For our family and so many others in the Evergreen area, Sylvia encouraged close observation of nature and birds. She and Bill embodied the advice I recently read in an essay entitled: From Beetles to Clouds – Finding Happiness in Nature's Surprises. "If you want to be joyful, you need to be surprised, often. And to do this, you really need to go outside." (Murr Brewster, Christian Science Monitor, October 5, 2021)

Whether it was seeing the first Pasque flower of spring, the first bluebird to arrive, or the first Rufous hummingbird in July, it always merited a phone call to the Brockners who were invariably thrilled to get the news. Thank you, Sylvia and Bill, for sharing your love of nature and its surprises. We will forever cherish the joy that you nurtured in all of us.