

JOSEPHINE CONLON ERNSTEIN

LANSING — Josephine Conlon Ernstein of 56 Conlon Road, Lansing, age 97, died on Monday, June 11, 2001 at the Groton Nursing Facility. Born January 1, 1904, she was the daughter of Katharine Knettles Conlon and Andrew James Conlon. She was predeceased by her husband, Fernand Ernstein, and two brothers, Lawrence H. Conlon and Robert M. Conlon. She is survived by her stepdaughter, Yvaine Gobert of Lille, France; two nephews, Lawrence H. (Pat) Conlon (Constance) of Lansing and James E. Conlon (Mallory) of Brooktondale; and two nieces, Katharine C. Payne (Thomas) of Lansing and Elizabeth C. Chambers (Anthony, deceased) of Bradford, PA.

A graduate of Ithaca High School, Jo taught the school year 1922-23 in a one room school, Lansing Field District School No. 14, after which she attended Cornell, graduating in 1927. Her junior year was spent at the Sorbonne in Paris. She taught French and Latin at Ithaca High School starting in 1927, earning an M.S. in French at Columbia University in 1935. Taking a sabbatical year at the University of Berne, Switzerland in 1946, she earned an M.S. in German. She became Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages at Ithaca High School in 1947.

Jo took early retirement from Ithaca High School in 1961 and soon started her second career, as volunteer educational consultant and head mistress to L'Ecole la Providence in Des Chappelles, Haiti. For the next thirty years, she became "Auntie Jo" to several hundred Haitian students, many of whom she personally sponsored in school from kindergarten through college, some of whom she persuaded her friends to sponsor. Much of Jo's energy was spent in weaning Haitian teachers from antiquated rote methods of instruction and recruiting Haitian administrators for ELP. Jo's efforts resulted in the founding of the Haiti Committee at Lansing United Methodist Church in 1981.

Although Jo's personal involvement ended several years ago in Haiti, there is now a school lunch at ELP which her program makes possible, and each year members of the Lansing Community continue to sponsor Haitian students. This on-going program also sponsors Volunteers in Mission trips to work in the Haitian community of Banique to repair the Methodist church and school and sponsor students there.

A memorial service is celebration of Jo's life will be held at the Lansing United Methodist Church on June 23 at 3:00pm, Rev. Martha Swords and Rev. Paul Pitkin officiating. Memorial contributions may be made to the Haiti Committee, Lansing United Methodist Church, 32 Brickyard Rd., Lansing, NY 14882.

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