



Stephanie Lovell

A brief biography

Stephanie Lovell was born on April 28th, 1937 in Detroit Michigan. At the time, her father Alfred Lovell Junior was aspiring to be a Foreign Service Officer for the Department of State, and her mother, Lee Pennock, was a young bride who would eventually become a writer and book reviewer.

The first of the family's many moves would be brief posting in Montreal, Canada. They narrowly missed being sent to Singapore in 1940. This would have meant spending the war in an internment camp in the Pacific. Instead, they were stationed in Bogota, Columbia. Stephanie's brother Alfred Lovell III was born at the American hospital in Panama. The family returned to the the United states and lived in Herndon, VA when it was mostly farmland and dirt roads- unrecognizable today expect for the post office and train station while Alfred Lovell was then assigned to serve in London, Warsaw and Paris during the heat of World War II. He was responsible for the organization and administration of the Refugee Relief Act.

During this time Stephanie's baby brother died in an unfortunate accident. After long periods of separation for the family, they were eventually reunited in a post-war Paris. Stephanie remembers well a heatless apartment with high ceilings off of Avenue Foch, roller-skating down the Champs Elyssée followed by the standard Poodles her parents bred, she recalls miraculous meals and her first taste of foie gras... She also remembers her confusion at the meanness of Madame Martin, her 5th grade teacher telling her she was the stone that did not fit in the brick wall of the class. Her brother Andrew was born in Paris in 1948 and her sister Katherine shortly after the family's return to the United States in 1952.

Her parents divorced just before Stephanie graduated from Hingham High School in Massachusetts. Both of her parents remarried. Her father had two more children: Douglas and Hope Lovell. Stephanie gained three steps sisters, Lydia, Madge and Molly, when her mother married architect and peace activist William Reed Huntington.

Stephanie graduated from the now defunct Garland Junior College in 1957 and went on to earn a Master of Fine Art at the University of Michigan. She graduated in 1965. She was briefly married to fellow UM alum, Michael Fortuna in 1960. They divorced within 2 years.

In 1965 during a holiday in Mexico, Stephanie crossed paths with an unlikely suitor, Pierre-Richard Villedrouin, an architecture student in exile from Haiti. They married quickly and moved to Long Island, NY together. Stephanie taught art for five years at Shelter Rock Public Schools in New Hyde Park, NY and Pierre-Richard worked for the Manhattan firm X. They had 2 daughters, Nathalie and Emma.

Upon the death in 1971 of Haiti's "President for Life" François Duvalier (aka Papa Doc) Pierre-Richard's uncle asked him to return to the homeland to build a landmark house. For this time limited assignment, Pierre-Richard took a leave of absence from his Manhattan firm. He never returned.

Haiti in the 1970s bears little resemblance to what we may think of it today. At the time it was just emerging from a repressive dictatorship with curfews and vicious reprisals. The new "President for Life", Jean-Claude Duvalier (aka Baby Doc) allowed more freedoms and Stephanie created her own micro enterprise, creating Atelier Nushka where she designed and fabricated embroidered clothing and home goods. At its' peak her clients included Henri Bendel and Jax of NY and boutiques as far flung as Hawaii, Aspen, Nantucket and St Thomas. The family grew to 5 with the birth of their third daughter, Maëlle, in 1973. Pierre-Richard and Stephanie would divorce in 1976. Despite this fact, Stephanie stayed on in the island nation until 1985. She parlayed her micro-enterprise experience into a management job with General Mills who, like many American companies, took advantage of the inexpensive labor costs in Haiti to staff their factories. Stephanie was a production manager and helped stock American toy stores with the immensely popular Care Bears. Before whispers against the Duvalier family's reign became a full throated revolt, General Mills pulled out of Haiti ahead of the expected unrest. Stephanie made the difficult decision to leave the country her daughters had grown up in and come home to the United States.

Manufacturing in America was winding down by the time she returned in 1985. She managed to find work with COLECO (makers of the Cabbage Patch doll) and then the Robby Len, Swimwear company - both in Hartford, Connecticut. When those jobs inevitably went off-shore, she reinvented herself and eventually found work as a jobs counselor for the state of Connecticut.

Once her girls were off to college and on their own paths, Stephanie found a passion that would sustain her for years to come: Ornithology. She became an accomplished birder, traveling around the world on trips and served as President of the Connecticut chapter of the Audubon Society.

Stephanie's mother would pass away in 2006. When her daughter, the DC based jeweler Emma Villedrouin, asked her to move from Connecticut to the DC area, Stephanie was initially resistant. Emma had two young children at the time and Stephanie's other daughters lived in California and France respectively. Stephanie decided to return to the region she knew as a girl and eventually found her community at Leisure World in Silver Spring, MD. She made many steadfast friends and participated in a great many activities. She took on the vice Presidency and then the Presidency of the Montgomery County Birding Club.

In retirement, she returned to her passion for textiles and her artistry soon garnered her a prime spot at the Montgomery County Farm Women's Cooperative Market in Bethesda, MD. She could be found there selling the colorful quilted items she produced, from bedspreads and bags to trivets and placemats almost every Saturday. She enjoyed the fellowship of the Market making profound friendships. Her booth neighbor, Stefano Middej, who sells fine olive oils from Italy became the son she never had. Stephanie worried about the fate of the Market- which is under tremendous pressure from developers whose schemes are relentlessly transforming much of Bethesda's Wisconsin avenue corridor. She cherished her time there and especially enjoyed

sending her pieces out into the world, brightening the homes of her patrons and friends with her unique splashes of color.

Stephanie Lovell was a doer. She needed to make things and go places. Her birding trips took her all over the world. From Alaska and Costa Rica, to Brazil's Pantanal and Amazon to the American Southwest and France's Camargue. Reflecting on her life, she said the greatest joy of her life has been her three daughters. She passed peacefully at her home surrounded by her children on June 11th, 2019.

She is survived by her siblings Andrew, Katherine, Douglas and Hope Lovell and their spouses, her stepsisters Molly Silloway and Madge Huntington, her three daughters Nathalie Villedrouin-Soussan, Emma Villedrouin and Maëlle Beckrich, her sons in law Ilan Soussan, Michael Drabble and Dominique Beckrich and eight grand children: Elijah and Guinevere Soussan residing in Long Beach California, Felix and Xavier Drabble in Sidi Bou Saïd Tunisia, Maxime, Nicolas, Paul and Alice Beckrich in Obernai France.