

Jeanette Singleton, Woman's Rights Advocate
By Murphy Miller, FamilyAtLouisiana.com

She was an advocate for a woman's right to insurance benefits following their husband's retirement, death and divorce. The Louisiana law was a model for the federal COBRA law many benefit from today. (1) Her name is Jeanette Catherine Singleton and she is the 3rd great granddaughter of Frederic Miller and Victoria Mayer. Frederic is the son of Anne Marie Thaison. Jeanette parents were John Christian Singleton and Mary Elizabeth Miller. (2)



Jeanette Singleton (4)

Jeanette married Vivian Joseph Gianelloni, Jr., a native of San Francisco, CA. "V.J." as he was known, was a 1942 LSU graduate and a football player. During World War II he served with the 526th Armored Infantry Battalion and was the commanding officer of the security company for General Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group headquarters from its organization in Normandy until VE Day. He received a Bronze Star and the Combat Infantryman's Badge for his wartime service. (3)

Jeanette Singleton, Baton Rouge community leader, advocate for women's issues, and beloved mother, passed away on Friday, August 31, 2012. Jeanette was born in 1922 in Orange, Texas, and raised in Vinton, Louisiana. She came to Baton Rouge to attend LSU, graduating in 1942, and called Baton Rouge her home for the rest of her life.

Jeanette married V.J. Gianelloni, Jr., and had six children with him. Jeanette was very active in Baton Rouge community affairs. She was for many years one of the adult leaders of the Riverside 4-H Club, which was one of the leading 4-H clubs in the state. She also was for many years active with her sorority, Alpha Phi, serving as treasurer for the organization, among other roles. Jeanette was a member and president of OWL, the Older Women's League. She actively supported her husband in his service to the Capital City Kiwanis Club.

A breast cancer survivor, Jeanette became an advocate for insurance coverage for women who were left without insurance after their husbands retired, died, or divorced them. She lobbied in the Louisiana legislature for a state law granting insurance coverage at previous rates to such women. During that period, she was a familiar figure in the halls of the state capitol building. That Louisiana law was passed and served as a model for the COBRA law, which covers spouses in such situations on a national basis. For her role in that effort, she was selected by the Ladies' Home Journal in 1984 as one of its 50 - one from each state -- American Heroines. Ladies' Home Journal titled

Jeanette an "Insurance Champion" for her pioneering effort to extend insurance coverage. Jeanette also lobbied on behalf of efforts to establish respite homes for families that cared at home for handicapped individuals. In 1993 Jeanette received her

Master's degree from LSU. At the time, she was 71 years old and the oldest graduate to receive a master's degree.

Jeanette was a talented writer, and in later years spent a lot of time writing biographical stories and items about life in rural Louisiana when she was young. An article Jeanette wrote about a trip she took to Israel was published in the *Morning Advocate* in 1982. She also wrote many letters and commentaries that were published in the *Advocate*.

A confirmed Christian, Jeanette and her husband V.J. Gianelloni donated the land upon which St. Jude Catholic Church was built. Later in life, she became a member of St. John's United Methodist Church. Most importantly of all, Jeanette was the devoted mother of six children. At age 11, her daughter, Marcia Lynn, called "Muffet," contracted eastern equine encephalitis, which left Muffet severely handicapped. For the next forty years, Jeanette cared for Muffet, while raising her other five children, along with helping to raise five nephews and nieces who were orphaned young. (5)

(1) FindAGrave.com Memorial # 103422110. Original source unknown.

(2) Southwest Louisiana Records (1750 – 1900). CD. Rev. Donald J. Hebert. Hebert Publications. P.O. Box 147, Rayne, LA 70578.

(3) FindAGrave.com, Memorial # 20636327

(4) Morris, George. Date unknown. Title unknown. *Baton Rouge Advocate*.

(5) FindAGrave.com Memorial # 103422110. Original source unknown.