



## Jacqueline I Gordon

December 26, 1926 - November 25, 2024

Jacqueline (Jackie) Irene Gordon (nee Wright) died peacefully in her sleep, Monday morning November 25th, 2024 at her apartment at Timberhill Place in Corvallis, Oregon at the age of 97.

Jackie is survived by her son, Justin; her two daughters Dee and Judy; and many grandchildren and great grandchildren. Lou Gordon, Jackie's husband of 71 years, pre-deceased her in 2022.

Jackie was born December 26th, 1926, to James Preble Wright and Winifred Frances Wright (nee Bishop) in Hanford, California. Jackie graduated from the University High School in Los Angeles CA and received a B.A. in Sociology from UCLA. While working on her Master's degree, she co-authored "The Ethnic Reference" in 1950, a study about how people talk and refer to people of other ethnicities.

While Lou was in the army, Jackie worked for an accountant in Denver. Then later used that experience to get a job working as a secretary at the Scripps Visibility Laboratory in San Diego. The VisLab used atmospheric optics (a branch of physics) to study camouflage and detection over both land and ocean. Their protocols for ocean search and rescue missions saved the lives of many downed pilots.

Jackie was fascinated by the papers she typed, but frustrated because she couldn't follow the science. She asked her boss for textbooks and began reading. She taught herself physics and calculus and, later, several computer programming languages. Her boss promoted her from Secretary to Lab Technician when she started correcting mistakes in the lab reports.

The first atmospheric optics paper Jackie authored was published in 1960. She went on to author or co-author more than 50 articles. Jackie often presented her papers at science conferences and was the only woman in attendance for years.

When astronaut Gordon Cooper said he had seen a pickup truck cross the U.S.-Mexico border from his Mercury VII space capsule, NASA hired the VisLab to investigate. Jackie interviewed all the astronauts and helped design the Gemini Visual Acuity Experiment for Gemini flights 5 and 7. Jackie analyzed the measurements from space and proved it was possible for the human eye to receive enough information in space to correctly identify a vehicle's dust cloud on the earth's surface. She said Gordon Cooper had excellent eyesight, knew his geography, and was an experienced bush pilot before he was an astronaut. All of which helped him correctly interpret what he saw.

In 1966, Jackie and Lou moved to Corvallis, Oregon. Jackie's boss allowed her to keep her job and Jackie became a remote worker before there was internet by using a telephone and the US mail.

When she wasn't working or raising her children, Jackie volunteered. She was president of Hadassah more than once and Principal of the Mid-Willamette Valley Jewish Community School. She helped start Beit Am, the Jewish Community organization that eventually became a synagogue and was its first president. She was also a founding member of the Corvallis Jewish Burial

Society. When a visiting rabbi said there were some Jewish inmates in the Oregon state penitentiary, Jackie organized a group to provide the men with Jewish services and Passover seders. Her volunteer efforts were not confined to the Jewish Community. For decades Jackie donned an apron once a month at the Soup Kitchen even though she hated cooking.

In 1975, Jackie's boss resigned from VisLab. The new head of VisLab had been told to downsize and he couldn't understand why some woman who lived a thousand miles away and didn't even have a science degree should be on the payroll. Her co-workers argued that her work was invaluable. It helped, but not enough. Jackie was kept on for a couple years, then let go.

By this time, Jackie, who had been studying atmospheric data, knew about increasing pollution levels, climate change and the ozone layer depletion. She felt the data VisLab had accumulated was of historical significance, but it was stored on magnetic reel-to-reel tapes and much of it had not been published. She also felt she was close to generating an equation that would describe the relationship of several measurements such that one could be used to predict the others.

Jackie started a company, Viz. Ability, Inc., for the sole purpose of continuing her work. She successfully submitted and received grants from government agencies to work as an independent researcher. She published more of the data and several predictive equations and models that are still used and cited today. In 1987, the Scripps Visibility Laboratory closed its doors. A co-worker rescued all the reel-to-reel tapes of data and sent them to Jackie. Shortly after the Visibility Laboratory closed, Jackie's last grant proposal, one that would have enabled digitizing of all the Visibility Laboratory data, was turned down. Jackie decided she would not resubmit. She would retire, having done what she could.

Jackie enjoyed going to classical music concerts and plays. She particularly loved dance performances and musicals. She said they reminded her of her dance classes in college where she met Gene Kelly. Jackie was an avid reader with eclectic tastes and also liked to sing. She grew up singing in church choirs on Sundays because her mother was a soloist in several choirs. Jackie joined the Beit Am choir and could sing all the Tenor, Alto and 2nd Soprano parts for all the songs.

Jackie credited Fitness Over 50 for her health and longevity. She and Lou went to Fitness Over 50 almost every morning for decades. Jackie said it kept her young. She and Lou loved camping when they were younger. After joining Fitness Over 50, they went on more than one canoe trip into the Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Area on the border between Minnesota and Canada. Then, in their late 80s, when Jackie was in a wheelchair, they took one last trip around the world to visit friends and colleagues no longer able to travel.

In her later years, Jackie enjoyed playing Guild Wars, an online MMO RPG. Arenanet, the makers of Guild Wars, thought she might have been their oldest player. One of the things Jackie liked most about Guild Wars was that other family members played it. She liked how the family could live across the country, but could meet up “live” (with their avatars) in the guild hall for a birthday celebration. Family was very important to Jackie.

In 2017, Jackie and Lou sold their home of 52 years and moved to Timberhill assisted living. COVID was a difficult time, but they had each other. When Lou died in 2022, Jackie said she told him, “I’m not ready to go. I want to see what happens.” Jackie followed politics and read the paper every day almost her entire life starting when she made a scrapbook of World War II articles.

Jackie didn't like cut flowers. She preferred living plants. Therefore, in lieu of flowers, the family suggests a donation to one of her favorite charities. Some of the charities she supported were: Corvallis Beit Am Jewish Community, Hadassah, Friends of Mogen David (the Jewish equivalent of the Red Cross), Nature Conservancy, ACLU, and Planned Parenthood.

# Cemetery Details

## Waverly Jewish Cemetery

Albany, OR 97321

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

NOV **26**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Waverly Jewish Cemetery  
Albany, OR 97321

# Tribute Wall

JU

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Judy** - July 03, 2025 at 08:11 PM

JU

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Judy** - July 03, 2025 at 08:09 PM

JU

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Judy** - July 03, 2025 at 08:04 PM

JU

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Judy** - July 03, 2025 at 08:00 PM

KA

“ *In the brief amount of time I had gotten the pleasure of knowing Jackie, I can say she quickly became one of my favorite residents to work with over at Timberhill Place. She was one tough cookie and had sense of humor that meshed with mine very well. I wish I would have gotten the chance to pick her brain about her life achievements, as upon reading this I found that she was an incredibly brilliant woman. It was an honor to be able to meet her and she is greatly missed.*

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**Kailynne** - November 27, 2024 at 02:24 PM