

# WELCOME TO Hepper House

It's arguable that Putney would not be Putney without her—down-to-earth, community-minded, and with the strength of purpose of a blizzard. She came to Putney in 1939, met and married her husband here, and came back after college to teach history, raise four of her own children and countless others who came through her dorm, and shape the culture of the school in ways large and small. For these reasons, and so many others, one of Putney's new dormitories will be named for Hepper Caldwell '46.

For all those who encountered her during their time at Putney—and there are many; she and her husband, Johnny Caldwell '46, spent the better part of fifty years here—most recall her sturdy character first and foremost.

"This is a person with enormous emotional strength," said Sarah Gund '60, who arrived as a freshman in 1956 and built a connection with the Caldwells that lasted a lifetime. Sarah and her husband, Geoffrey, are both contributors to the dorm project.

Gund remembers that, even as a young teenager, she could see that Hepper had a very full plate. Her children were young at that time, close in age, and she and Johnny both taught and managed dorms.

She lived in a cramped faculty apartment for most of her long career at Putney, raising four children while being a mentor and surrogate parent to literally hundreds of students," said Emily Jones. "Without making a contest of it, it's fair to

say that Hepper is likely the single most beloved of Putney's long-term faculty.

Hepper arrived during mud season 1939 to tour the school with her brother.

"My most vivid memory was of a truck by the old bell. It was filled with hay. Students were throwing in their knapsacks and duffle bags, getting ready to join their gear and take off on a Long Spring trip," Caldwell recalled in 2015. "How exciting, I thought."

In 2015, on recalling her earliest years here, she wrote: "I always wanted to come back to school after a vacation. It was so exciting. There was so much to do."

At her memorial service in 2018, Kate Ganz '62 and Hepper's son Tim '72 recalled her spirit.

Hepper's son Tim saw the arc of her life broadly: "Mom embraced life here and all it has to offer. Her enthusiasm, energy and intellect were an integral part of the Putney School and touched the broader community: local friends, former classmates, fellow board members

and singers and all the other people she touched along the way," he said.

It is perhaps worth noting that this is the first building on campus to be named only for a woman (Gray House is named for Ed and Mabel Gray)—a remarkable woman who touched the lives of so many with her deep engagement with life.

Ganz recounted a time the Caldwells had taken her skiing at Tuckerman's Ravine, a very demanding downhill ski experience that requires the skier to hike up for two hours, then plunge down a steep chute.

"I know a lot of you know what Tuckerman's looks like but, for those of you who don't, it's very, very, very steep," said Ganz. "As I stood there frozen with fear, all of a sudden Hepper, in her quiet way, appeared at my shoulder."

"I felt at that time, and I still feel, that along with being my history teacher, my dorm head, my counselor, my justice of the peace, and my beloved friend, Hepper really was, and always will be, my guardian angel."

"Having taken it all in and understanding it perfectly, Hepper very quietly said to me, 'Take the first turn where I turn and you will be fine.'"

**One of Putney's  
two new dorms  
will be named for  
Hep Caldwell '46**

