



Jane Silverstein  
Grade 8 B. June 16, 1922  
Age 13



*Jane Silverstein Ries*  
Landscape Architect and Land Steward Advocate  
2004 ASLA MEDAL NOMINATION



Re: Nomination of Jane Silverstein Ries, FASLA for The ASLA Medal



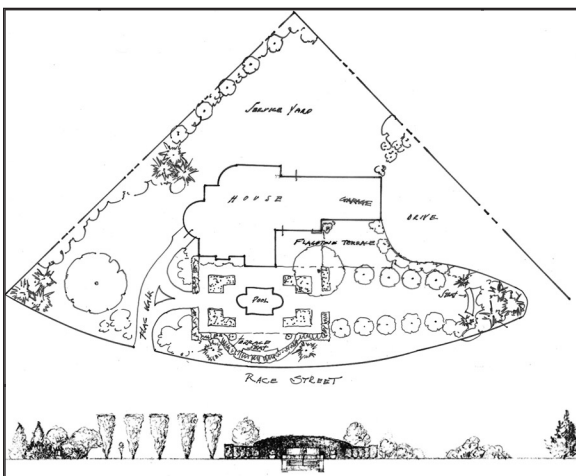
## *prelude*

Jane Silverstein Ries was once quoted as saying, “there isn’t a day that goes by that a plant doesn’t give me a surprise.” In so many ways, she has been a constant delight and surprise to the City of Denver, Colorado and her chosen profession of landscape architecture. She is a woman who lives her life, much like she tends her garden, “well, and high-spirited.” Throughout her career that spanned some fifty-six years, Jane, the first female landscape architect in Colorado, demonstrated her own uncompromising, pioneering sense of awareness, understanding, and stewardship of land use values. Land use values that she believed in, fought for, and taught daily to others.



## *pursuit of a profession*

Born in 1909, Jane grew up in a time when society’s expectations of young women focused solely on their domestic abilities. She was, by all accounts, a maverick and had the personality to match. Her mother understood this about her daughter and set out to find an appropriate women’s profession that would satisfy Jane’s love of nature and plants. Ironically, it was the recommendation of a family friend, Irvin McCrary (a prominent Denver landscape architect) that led Jane toward her professional pursuit.



In 1929, Jane enrolled in the Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture, Gardening and Horticulture for Women in Groton, Massachusetts. She graduated in 1933, and began her professional career working for Denver landscape architect Irvin J. McCrary, the very same person who recommended the profession to her mother. While there, Jane designed the landscape for the new women’s dormitory at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Six months later, she left the firm and started her own firm. Her business started by designing gardens for many of her mother’s friends; Jane’s big break came within her first year of private practice while working with architect Lester L. Jones on the landscape and courtyard design for the General Electric Show Home.

With the onslaught of World War II, Jane, like so many of her generation, supported the war effort by working as a consultant for several local architects and designed the grounds of war housing projects under the Federal Housing Authority in Wyoming and Nebraska. In 1943, she applied to Officer's Training School in the Women's Reserve of the U.S. Coast Guard and was later stationed in New York City to take surveys of all the Coast Guard property in the 3rd Naval District. Released from active duty in 1945, Jane stayed in New York to explore working at the well known firm of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill. Unhappy with the politics of a big design firm, Jane returned to Denver in 1947 and resumed her practice. During her long professional career, Jane implemented well over 2,000 design plans in the State of Colorado for private estate and civic landscapes. At a mid-career peak, Jane was inducted as an ASLA Fellow in 1965. In the later part of her life, Jane's home, office and garden were officially designated as a Denver Landmark.



## *approach to design*

Jane's design approach was influenced by the beautification of the City of Denver and her experiences and study at Lowthorpe. During her childhood, the City of Denver went through some distinct changes under the leadership of Mayor Robert W. Speer. Speer's leadership was a crucial catalyst for Denver's transformation from a dusty mining service town to an urban oasis with city parks, tree-lined boulevards and parkway systems. Jane fondly recalls the effect the 110,000 seedling tree giveaway had on her and the city.

Throughout her career, Jane focused on the design of small estate and urban gardens, lifting her clients' awareness, well before it was in vogue that gardens were about livable environments, sustainable design, and stewardship of the land. Jane was also the creative force behind many civic improvement projects, including: Denver Botanic Gardens, Civic Center Park, renovation of the Governor's Mansion, Colorado Heritage Center, Larimer Square (Denver's first urban renewal project), and the Denver Art Museum.

Jane's signature style is immediately recognizable as it differed from the popular Beaux-Arts tradition of the time. Her style is more aligned with the latter cubist influenced work of the infamous three — Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley and James Rose. Her designs have the charm and romance of an English cottage garden mixed with very modern, organic, and geometric symmetry. Jane was able to blend the architecture of the







home with the outdoor rooms of the garden utilizing pathways, walls, pool, fountains, raised beds, sculpture, trellises and plant materials as defining elements in the landscape. She established a demanding ethic for the development of suburban, prairie, and mountain sites. Jane would slip a home into the natural topography “without disturbing the existing land,” thus making vistas and native vegetation into a natural extension of the garden.

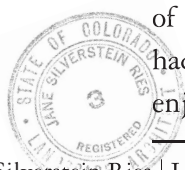
## *impact on the profession*

Woven throughout the fabric of her career and life were two of Jane’s principle beliefs: the importance of a collegial, professional network that encouraged individual excellence and collective impact and the responsibility of every citizen to take part in civic debate. She put these beliefs into practice and made an example of herself for profession.

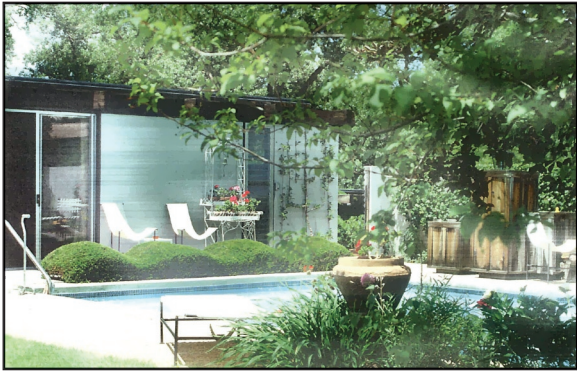
Jane collaborated with Andrew Larson, and authored Colorado’s first landscape architecture licensing exam. She was Colorado’s first female landscape architect and the third person to receive a professional license from the State. Jane founded and was president of the Colorado Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (CCASLA) — at the time it was the Rocky Mountain Chapter and included Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Wyoming — in 1959. She was on the task force to establish a graduate program of Landscape Architecture at the University of Colorado at Denver.

Jane made many volunteer contributions of time and consulting services to the improvement of Denver’s public places. She served as the CCASLA’s Historic Preservation Liaison to ASLA, leading the way in defining the importance of preserving historic landscapes and spearheaded the effort to rehabilitate the grounds of Colorado’s Governor’s Mansion. Jane volunteered her services to the restoration of the Molly Brown House Museum garden and creation of the Ninth Street Historic Park.

For over half a century, few significant land use issues arose within Denver or the State of Colorado, without Jane’s wisdom or wit placed on their merits. She involved herself in the importance of prairie and mountain lands, the need for mass transit, control of rampant growth and good planning, the onslaught of drought, and the replacement of street trees. Governors and Mayors sought her advice; Jane always had the ear of the City’s policy makers. Throughout her career, Jane enjoyed great collaborative partnerships with many of Denver’s leading







architects. Jane contributed many articles to “The Green Thumb” — a quarterly publication of the Denver Botanic Gardens — and generously gave interviews to gain publicity for the causes she was championing.



In 1983, Jane partnered with CCASLA to initiate the Jane Silverstein Ries (JSR) Award, which annually recognizes a person, group, or organization that has demonstrated a pioneering sense of awareness and stewardship to land-use values. In 1997, the JSR Foundation was formally established in her name. This program seeks to recognize those who value and seek to protect what Jane cares about most, the land. At a time when open space is often sacrificed for the sake of growth, land use is an issue that greatly impacts Colorado. Past honorable award winners have been the Platte River Greenway Foundation and the Colorado Division for the Public Land Trust.



Too numerous to list, Jane served on multiple boards, committees, and commissions of local civic organizations. Some of these include the Advisory Committee to the Denver Partnership, The Urban Design Forum, Colorado Nature Conservancy, Denver Botanic Gardens Horticulture Advisory Committee, The Park People, the Denver Planning Board, and the Denver Urban Forest.

### *a woman of consequence*

Jane Silverstein Ries is a mentor and role model for women within the profession of Landscape Architecture. She has been a tireless cheerleader, volunteer, and sage for fellow women in design. Jane, like many of her contemporaries, led the way for women all over the country to begin dreaming about a life beyond traditional values.



Jane became a uniquely influential advocate for understanding land uses and the intelligent stewardship of the environment, for sustainable design and good planning, and for the importance of aesthetic green space for higher standards of urban life. She also understood the importance of civic responsibility and responsibilities that landscape architects owe to their profession.

*“Above all, Jane was a catalyst — as a mentor to community leaders and opinion makers; as a popular designer of small urban gardens; and as a tireless advocate for urban greenspace and untouched open space, for adequate park funding, for conservation of the urban forest and historic landscapes, in short for ‘quality of place’.”* - Carolyn and Don Etter, Honary Members of ASLA, Historians, and Former Managers of Denver’s Parks & Recreation Department.



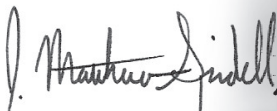
# The asla medal


The ASLA Medal is an honor that seeks to recognize individuals whose lifetime achievements and contributions to Landscape Architecture have a unique and lasting impact on the welfare of the public and the environment.

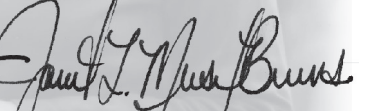
Jane Silverstein Ries has a devoted civic conscience, an unorthodox approach to design, and decades of service that have made a great impact on the City of Denver and the State of Colorado. She displays a contagious exhilaration for life and landscape architecture. Her work in Denver has become legendary; designers in the region respect her and are grateful for her contributions to the profession and the beautification of our city.


With that in mind, we are pleased and proud to nominate Jane Silverstein Ries for the ASLA Medal; becoming the third woman to receive this great honor and the 33rd Landscape Architect.

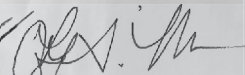
Respectfully,  
Colorado Chapter of ASLA & the JSR Foundation


  
 Matt Spidell, CCASLA  
 President

  
 Ron Bevens, CCASLA  
 Trustee

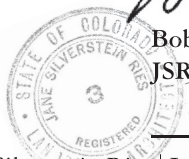
  
 Janet Meisel-Burns, CCASLA  
 Past-President

  
 Catharine Mitchell, ASLA  
 JSR Foundation

  
 Lynn Moore, FASLA  
 JSR Foundation

  
 Tom Hawkey, ASLA  
 JSR Foundation

  
 Bob Smith, FASLA  
 JSR Foundation





# additional information:

## PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

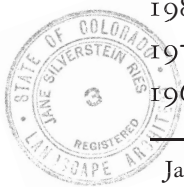
- 1989-1994 Land Mark Design, Inc. | Senior Consulting Advisor
- 1947-1994 Resumed Private Practice, Denver, CO
- 1945-1947 Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, New York City, NY
- 1943-1945 U.S. Coast Guard Service
- 1935-1943 Private Practice, Denver, CO
- 1932-1935 McCrary, Cully & Carhart, Denver, CO
- 1932 Graduate, Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture for Women, Groton, MA

## COMMUNITY & PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION AND SERVICE

- 1986-1987 Landscape Architecture Foundation, Board of Directors
- 1985-1993 Urban Forest, Board Member
- 1985-1994 CCASLA Book Committee, *The Evolution of the Colorado Landscape*
- 1983-1994 Jane Silverstein Ries Award Committee, Member
- 1983-1989 CCASLA, Historic Preservation Liaison to ASLA
- 1983-1984 The Denver Partnership, Civic Design Team
- 1982-1994 Urban Design Forum, Member
- 1981-1983 S.R.DeBoer Committee for "Parks and Open Spaces, a Denver Perspective"
- 1974-1994 Colorado Nature Conservancy, Member
- 1977-1980 Colorado Nature Conservancy, Board Member
- 1976-1994 Women's Forum, Charter Member
- 1975-1994 The Park People, Board Member, Memorial Tree Committee
- 1971-1987 Denver Botanic Gardens, Horticulture Advisory Committee
- 1968 State of Colorado Board of Examiners of Landscape Architecture, Chairperson
- 1963-1974 Denver Planning Board, Urban Environments Subcommittee, Member
- 1959 Rocky Mountain Chapter of ASLA, Founder & President
- 1952-1954 Mayor's Citizen Advisory Board for Denver City Parks
- 1946-1994 American Society of Landscape Architects, Member
- 1982-1994 Lower Downtown Denver District, Member

## HONORS, AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

- 1996 Green Industry Person of the Year
- 1996 Denver Botanic Gardens, Distinguished Achievement in Horticulture
- 1990 "A Showcase of Celebrated Seniors" | Mizel Museum of Judaica
- 1990 Colorado Women's Hall of Fame
- 1985 AIA Community Achievement Award
- 1984 Coors Salute to Women Award
- 1983 Founding of the JSR Award & Foundation for Land Use Values
- 1982 23rd Annual Colorado Garden & Home Show, Woman of the Year
- 1980 Big Sisters of Colorado Salute to Women, Award for Women in the Arts
- 1978 Mini Park Commendation Award, for Larimer Square
- 1965 ASLA Fellow





# *additional information:*

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

### *The August Gap*

Julia Jane Silverstein  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
August 1949, p14

### *Plan for Landscape Development*

Julia Jane Silverstein  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
January 1952, p14

### *Water in the Garden*

Julia Jane Silverstein  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
July 1959, p.198

### *The Christmas Garden*

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
November & December 1960, p.316

### *Delicious and Scary*

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
September 1962, p.267

### *Frances White Novitt 1918-1974*

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
Winter 1974, p.133

### *Versatile Viburnums*

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
Spring 1977, p.9

### *Antipodal Plants are Astounding*

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Green Thumb Magazine  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
Spring 1980, p.11

### *Clematis recta*

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Mountain Plain & Garden  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
Autumn/Winter 1980, p.30

### *The August Gap* (reprint)

Jane Silverstein Ries  
Mountain Plain & Garden  
Denver Botanic Gardens  
Spring 1996, p.15



# VESTAR CAPITAL PARTNERS

FEDERICO F. PEÑA  
Managing Director

March 15, 2004

Mr. Rodney L. Swink, FASLA  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Swink and other members of FASLA:

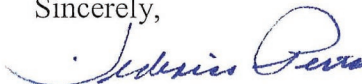
I endorse the nomination of Jane Silverstein Ries for the ASLA Medal. She is highly deserving of this professional recognition because she positively influenced ideas of regional design in Colorado and significantly contributed to Denver's civic development.

Through volunteerism and community involvement, and also through her design work, Jane taught peers, public officials, and her clients about sustainable land uses and intelligent stewardship of the environment. She advocated regionally-appropriate design and planning during a time when these were not popular topics of discussion. Jane helped her residential clients understand that gardens should promote stewardship of the land through use of native plants and suitable building placement. As a result, her gardens serve as excellent examples of appropriate and aesthetically-interesting regional design during Colorado's current severe drought.

Jane was also the creative force behind many civic improvement projects, including the Denver Botanic Gardens, Civic Center Park, Colorado Heritage Center, Denver Art Museum, and the renovation of the Governor's Mansion. Much of her design aesthetic evolved as a result of the efforts of one of Denver's mayors, Robert Speer. He advocated the City Beautiful form of design and instituted a massive tree-planting program. Jane was able to take this aesthetic further and adapt it to the area's semi-arid climate. She has left a lasting imprint on the Denver metropolitan area and a legacy for future generations.

The design work and advocacy of Jane Silverstein Ries has had a lasting impact on public welfare and the environment of Colorado. I hope your Society bestows her this much-deserved honor.

Sincerely,



Federico Peña  
Former Mayor of Denver

/rh





50 F Street, NW, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Telephone: (202) 347-3375  
Fax: (202) 347-3690  
[www.publishers.org](http://www.publishers.org)

**Patricia S. Schroeder**  
President and  
Chief Executive Officer

March 10, 2004

Rodney L. Swink, FASLA  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Swink:

I'm writing to support the nomination of Jane Silverstein Ries to receive the American Society of Landscape Architects Medal. Jane's lifetime achievements and contributions to the profession have had a unique and lasting impact on the State of Colorado.

As a "pioneer of land use values," her tremendous work can be found all over the State. Further, because of her wonderful work, the Colorado Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects established the Jane Silverstein Ries Award that annually recognizes a person, group, or an organization that has demonstrated her same sense of awareness and stewardship to land use values.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Schroeder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patricia Schroeder  
Former Congresswoman of Colorado





March 15, 2004

Rodney L. Swink, FASLA  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**Re: LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT for the Nomination of Jane Silverstein Ries for the 2004 ASLA Medal**

Dear Mr. Swink and Selection Committee Members:

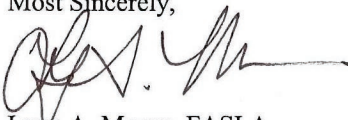
I take great pleasure in providing this heartfelt endorsement of Jane Silverstein Ries for the 2004 ASLA Medal. On behalf of the JSR (Jane Silverstein Ries) Foundation, I offer my complete support of her nomination. I also want to share my personal thoughts about the important role she has played as the first woman Landscape Architect in the State of Colorado and our most vocal advocate for land stewardship.

While Jane has unquestionably established a strong professional legacy in our region, it is her global promotion of land use values that has most impressed me and had the most significant impact on our region. Passionately committed to the profession of landscape architecture, she has been a tireless advocate for land stewardship and responsible development for over seven decades. Her philosophy that each of us must take personal responsibility for the health and livability of our planet has been vocalized through public forums, civic leaders and to anyone who would listen. In the Rocky Mountain region where the environment is especially sensitive and where drought is a household word, Jane's message has been particularly poignant. The JSR Foundation was established in 1997 to recognize Jane's dedication and influence in promoting awareness and stewardship to land use values.

As a woman in landscape architecture, I have always looked to Jane as a mentor and role model. Her personal integrity and commitment to her beliefs guides both my professional and personal life and her self-confidence and willingness to take risks continues to be an inspiration and motivation to me. When challenged about her beliefs, I will forever remember her standing tall and loudly proclaiming "I give not up!" This was a very impressive sight indeed, considering her less than five foot stature!

The professional influence of Jane Silverstein Ries remains a strong undercurrent in our region today, enhancing our awareness of our precious natural resources and actively promoting a reasonable balance between development and conservation. Her many decades of service to our profession have resulted in a lasting positive impact on the welfare of the public and the environment. I cannot think of a more worthy recipient of this important recognition and honor, and I am pleased to endorse Jane for the 2004 ASLA Medal.

Most Sincerely,



Lynn A. Moore, FASLA  
Vice President, JSR Foundation



**Phillip E. Flores, FASLA**  
1147 South Boston Court - Denver, Colorado 80247

**Landscape Architect**  
303.671.0408

March 3, 2004

Mr. J. Mathew Spidell, ASLA  
President, Colorado Chapter  
American Society of Landscape Architects

Attention: ASLA Medal Nomination Committee

Dear Mr. Spidell:

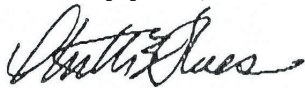
This letter is to wholeheartedly support the Colorado Chapter's nomination of Jane Silverstein Reis, FASLA for the 2004 ASLA Medal. In my forty-three years (as a practicing landscape architect) I have long since come to the conclusion that Jane Silverstein Reis is one of the few *Grand Dame's of Landscape Architecture*. She is truly one of our states true pioneers in the physical planning, design and stewardship of both man made and natural landscape environments.

For those of us young bucks and buckaroos who found ourselves in Colorado at the close of the 1960's era Jane quickly became our friend, supporter, inspirational guide and mentor. At that time there were only a few landscape architects here in Colorado who formed the Colorado Section of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the ASLA. Even with the sparse population of landscape architects back in the 50's and 60's Jane, her few Colorado cohorts and the Utah Section hosted the 1960 annual ASLA meetings in Boulder.

Jane Silverstein Reis, FASLA has, over the years, lead the profession of landscape architecture by example with her professional work and her personal demeanor in the Colorado community. Her often heard motto " I GIVE NOT UP" has been the inspiration of many of us who have had the extreme good fortune to know and work with Jane over the years. As one of my most significant mentors, Jane honored me as my escort as I was invested as a Fellow in the ASLA at the annual meetings in San Francisco in 1986.

I highly recommend Jane Silverstein Reis, FASLA to the Nomination Committee as the 2004 recipient of the American Society of Landscape Architects Medal. Thanks to the ASLA Medal Nomination Committee for its consideration in this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Phillip E. Flores, FASLA  
Senior Landscape Architect



Ellen Anderman  
4999 South Birch Street  
Littleton, CO 80121

Rodney L. Swink, FASLA  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

March 12, 2004

Dear Mr. Swink, and other members of FASLA,

I am honored to endorse the nomination of Jane Silverstein Ries for the ASLA Medal both because I believe she merits the acknowledgement of her leadership and vision in designing the residential landscape fabric of our Denver metropolitan area and because I appreciate her work every day as I look out my windows.

You might ask why I feel qualified to comment besides the purely personal relationship I have to her work. To that I can only answer that I am considered by others in my city to have a solid aesthetic appreciation and to understand the vital role of arts and culture in a city. I am a member of the Denver Art Museum's Collection Committee; a board member of the Friends Foundation of The Denver Public Library and the Mesa Verde Foundation. I have served on the boards and helped fund raise for The Douglas Society (for Native Arts at the Denver Art Museum), DU Art!, the support group of the University of Denver's School of Art and Architecture and been a judge for the Louisa May Arps and Colorado Center for the Book's Library of Congress contests for high school essayists. I graduated with honors in art history from Harvard/Radcliff College.

Before detailing the marvelous impact her creativity has had on me personally, let me say that that same imaginative and site and client sensitive landscaping is exhibited in every one of the many gardens she designed with which I am familiar. Additionally, these individual gardens have had a far reaching impact on all subsequent generations of landscape architects – as has been attested to me by several young designers. She truly pioneered the field and made Denverites aware of the importance and impact of good garden design.

Built in 1961-62, our house is a unique reflection of four strong design drives: of my parents, Joan and George Anderman; of the architect, Steele Watkins and of Jane Silverstein Ries. All were passionately involved and each contributed to the whole, from the very beginning. Jane Ries and my mother literally "sat" every possible part of the land to best site the house and the views from the interiors over the planned lawns and beds to the cottonwoods beyond. Jane laid out a magnificent iris bed for my father's pleasure, and designated beds, patio gardens and a pool area for enjoyment over the course of the year and for different

times of the day and numbers of people. She created an unobtrusive circular drive and subtly marked out the turn-off to and from the street, situated the barn and guest house-pool areas in a lovely whole, essentially creating a more formal street-side and another private lawn and garden side that enjoys wonderful vistas and a sense of rural remove that holds to this day, despite mighty encroachments of suburbia. In all, her talents are wonderfully exemplified in the "bones" of our landscape.

Yet it is for her openness to my parents desire to create a native landscape of buffalo grass, blue and side-oats gramma and western wheat, cottonwoods, pinon and New Mexican "cedar" (juniper) trees with thickets of chokecherry, wild plum and sumac that I most honor Jane's vision and flexibility as a landscape designer. She achieved an inspired "natural" feel, which we enjoy in every season.

For all of these reasons, I hope that your Society bestows this much-deserved honor on Jane Silverstein Ries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ellen Anderman", followed by a long horizontal flourish line.

Ellen Anderman