

WBGO's Jon Kalish fondly remembers environmental hero and long-time friend Carol Yannacone

By [Doug Doyle](#)

Published March 1, 2025 at 9:36 AM EST



Carol Yannacone

Host Intro: This week a 90 year-old woman who played an important role in the environmental movement passed away in Hawaii. She spent most of her life on Long Island where she and her husband helped found the Environmental Defense Fund and waged a campaign that resulted in a ban on the pesticide DDT.

WBGO's Jon Kalish has known **Carol Yannacone** for more than 40 years. He has this appreciation.

Jon Kalish: She came into this world on Friday the 13th, which earned her the nickname Jinx In high school. In 1951 she met her husband **Victor Yannacone** in a high school physics class taught by a teacher who thought girls shouldn't be studying science. As a biology major at Hofstra University, she was told females weren't allowed to take oceanography. Unable to afford more than her first two years in college, she took a job as a lab technician at Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island. In 1965 she noticed a huge fish kill in Yaphank Lake in Suffolk County and was furious, insisting that her lawyer husband Victor take action. After a string of courtroom victories, he won a nationwide ban of the pesticide.

It was Carol Yannacone who came up with the idea of starting the Environmental Defense Fund. After her husband started a class action lawsuit on behalf of Vietnam Veterans exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange, she spent several years working with the vets and their families, including children with profound birth defects.

She and her husband have lived in Maui for the last eight years, where they have a son. Carol Yannacone is also survived by a daughter in Patchogue, Long Island and three grandchildren.