



chapter 5.2

JANA LEA BROWN

Kiree & Orville's second-born (b. 1934 - d. 1981)

*Jana Lea's core belief—
“...doing with what we
have and not waiting for
what we don't have.”*

Written by her brother, Kenneth Brown

Jana Lea Brown was Kiree and Orville Brown's second child. She was born on the Brown family farm five miles south of Ava, MO, on February 12, 1934. And she was the second oldest grandchild of Ira and Mintia (Gunnels) Hartley.

Over half of the 20 Ira and Mintia Hartley grandchildren were either unborn or still in diapers when Jana Lea was in her high school years. Thus many of them did not get to know her very well, but they no doubt had heard of her—Jana Lea was a

family newsmaker for sure. According to everyone who knew her, Jana Lea had incredible earthly beauty, was a talented artist and musician, and was fiercely independent.

About her name, what was important to her was that she be called Janalea (as one word) and not just “Jana.” But to her Aunt Levon (Hartley) Luttrell Elenbarger, she was all “Jennie.”

Jana Lea desired and strived for the finer things in life. Unfortunately, Jana Lea died of a liver ailment in Kansas City, MO, at the young age of 47, always pursuing her dreams to the very end. Today, Jana Lea lives on through her five children, each one of whom seem to excel at one or more of her special characteristics.

Jana Lea grew up in rural surroundings, whether it was the old Brown farm south of Ava or in Nebraska where her dad worked for a large corn farm operation. She started school in the little Valley, Nebraska, community just west of Omaha. But Jana Lea finished the eighth grade at the one-room Black Oak School near the Brown farm in Missouri. Jana Lea's high school years started about the time her Dad brought the family to Ava, and he bought the family house just east of the Ava schools. Jana Lea was quite active in musical



At right, Jana Lea with her brothers, James and Kenneth around 1948.



At left, Jana Lea as an Ava High School cheerleader in 1950.

Below, ca 1949—Jana Lea with her younger siblings, Iris Ann, James and Kenneth, outside the family home that was purchased for the family in 1947.



Jana Lea's Life in a Nutshell

- Born 1934 in Douglas County, MO.
- Graduated from Ava High School in 1951
- Married Paul Sell in 1951
- Children:
 - Paula Sue
 - Infant boy
 - Rodney Lee
 - Jenné Lynne
 - Phillip Larry
 - John (Skip)
- Creator of Janalea Woodcuts in the 1960s
- Died 1981 in Kansas City, MO.



Jana Lea in her 1950 Ava High School band uniform with her little brother, Kenneth, the band's mascot.



Jana Lea outside courthouse at Ava—ca 1949.



Above, Jana Lea (and Paula) at the grave of Jana Lea's son buried at Fannon Cemetery.



Above, Jana Lea and Paul holding Rodney and Paula in Sunflower, KS, 1955.

activities at Ava High School, and was a very popular girl.

At some point in her high school career, Jana Lea started dating an older and handsome man, Paul Sell, a school teacher from down at Squires, MO.

Jana Lea Strikes Out In Life

Jana Lea and Paul were married in a small ceremony on Friday evening, February 16, 1951, in the Ava Assembly of God Church, just a few days after her 17th birthday. Paul and Jana Lea took up residence in a small cottage just east of the church (now torn down and an Ava Schools parking lot).

Fairly quickly, Paul started working for the Pettit family who operated several movie theatres in the area. Paul was assigned to the Pettit's theatre down in Gainesville, 30 miles south of Ava; and the couple moved there so that Paul could operate both Pettit's theatre and an appliance store they owned. By 1953, Paul and Jana Lea had moved to Mansfield north of Ava, and then to Sunflower, KS, in 1954.

Between 1951 and 1956, Jana Lea and Paul had four children. The couple was still in Gainesville when their first child, Paula Sue, was born November 25, 1951, in Springfield's St. John's Hospital. At some point, they moved to Mansfield where Paul operated the Pettit theatre there. It was on March 26, 1953, that a son was born at the Mansfield Hospital but with major health issues; he died the same day.

Around 1954, Jana Lea and Paul moved to Sunflower, KS, where lots of jobs could be had at the Sunflower Ordnance Plant. The couple lived in one of the same government-built frame duplexes like Jana Lea's sister, Evelyn, lived in earlier. Jana Lea and Paul lived in Sunflower for around three years.

On February 2, 1955, Jana Lea had the couple's third child, Rodney Lee, in a Lawrence, KS, hospital. Then 16 months later, on June 27, 1956, Jenné (pronounced Jen-nuh) Lynne, was born in the same hospital.

By the mid 1950s, the Korean War was over, and the Sunflower Ordnance Plant was no longer hiring. So Paul went into Kansas City to barber school, and he played his bass in club bands in the evening to make ends meet. After finishing barber school, Paul took the family to Clinton, MO, where he was an apprentice barber. Then in February, 1957, Jana Lea and Paul moved back to Ava, and Paul became a new barber in the ever-popular Duck-In Barber Shop on the northwest corner of the Ava square.

From Ava, the family relocated to Springfield where Paul

continued barbering for the rest of his life. The family rented a house on south Jefferson near Sunshine School, and the children started school there. Jana Lea worked hard at being a homemaker, taking the kids to all kinds of activities, and stretching the family budget to match a barber's pay. Her daughter, Paula, says: "...one of Mother's many gifts was that she could take a dime and turn it into a dollar." As their finances improved, Jana Lea and Paul built a beautiful but small home in south Springfield on Dayton Street.

Jana Lea's beauty didn't go unnoticed, as she was a finalist for Mrs. Springfield one year. Then Jana Lea met Larry Pendleton, a long-time and accomplished Springfield artist. She posed for him in a picture for which he reportedly had been waiting for the perfect person—an angelic face for the “angel” in the center of his career's masterpiece.

After their time together, Jana Lea gave birth to Pendleton's child, Phillip Sell, born on August 13, 1966, in Joplin, MO. Jana Lea and Paul had already separated, and Jana Lea, by this time had moved the children to Tipton Ford, MO, which is about halfway between Joplin and Neosho, MO, on old U.S. Highway 71.

Jana Lea was alone with her children but incredibly determined to take care of them and make a living. She used her

Below, Jana Lea featured in the *Joplin Globe* newspaper December 1966



Jana Lea with Paul, Rodney, Paula and Jenné -- ca 1962 with their dog “Katie” and cat “Puff”



Above, an original “Jana Lea Woodcut” with her signature carved in the lower right corner. The woodcut is owned by her son, Phillip Sell



Jana Lea with her sons, Phillip & Skip in Kansas City, ca 1980.

natural artistic abilities and ideas, and she came up with Janalea Woodcuts that became regionally famous and popular.

In December 1966, Jana Lea’s career story detailing her success was published in the *Joplin Globe* newspaper. The article provided a glimpse of her talents and determination; it is a story of someone who had artistic God-given talents that she put to use; plus she seemed to have had natural sales and business abilities that helped her build her career. At the end of the Joplin article, Jana Lea said her belief was in “doing with what we have and not waiting for what we don’t have.”

Jana Lea displayed and sold her woodcuts throughout the four-state area and was doing well financially; and it was while she was showing her work at Silver Dollar City that she met a Hawaiian wood carver by the name of John Vasconcellos.

Jana Lea and John married, and he moved back to Tipton Ford with the family. It was not a good marriage—he was abusive and an alcoholic. As a result, the older children went to live with their father, Paul, back in Springfield. Jana Lea, Phillip and John went to Hawaii. Jana Lea gave birth to John “Skip” Vasconcellos in Hawaii on April 18, 1970.

Eventually, Jana Lea would divorce John, and she took her two younger boys to Kansas City where she began rebuilding her life. Phillip and Skip attended Kansas City area schools, and Jana Lea was the same ‘soccer mom’ as she had been with her older kids; but at some point, her health began to fail—she developed a rare liver disease. It ate away at her until her death on September 24, 1981, at the Truman Medical Center in Kansas City.

Memorials to Jana Lea

On September 25, 1981, a memorial was held for Jana Lea at her church in Kansas City, the St. Mark’s Lutheran Church. In addition, Jana Lea was brought back to Ava for burial, and a funeral was held in Ava on September 26, 1981.

Members of the family recognized that Jana Lea was no ordinary person—she saw things different than most of us. So an outsider was brought in to officiate over the services. Dr. Prentice Meador, a former UCLA professor, and a Springfield, MO, minister, preached her funeral for the family. He did a good job explaining to everyone in rural Ava, how, as an artist, Jana Lea saw the world differently—certainly different from the time and the place in which she was born—she was, seemingly, ahead of her time.



Above, Jana Lea (holding Skip) at her mother’s house in Ava around 1979 or 1980. Along the back are Paula, Phillip, Jenné and Rodney.

Jana Lea's Children—Where Are They Now?

Paula Sue Sell graduated from Neosho (MO) High School and attended what is now Missouri State University in Springfield. After working several years in women's apparel retailing in Springfield, and wholesale in Dallas, Texas, Paula was transferred to Los Angeles, CA, where she met and married Frank Sacks in 1981. Frank is a San Francisco State University graduate, author, screenwriter and movie producer.

Following in her mother and father's entrepreneurial footsteps, Paula opened a store in Beverly Hills, "Paula Sacks Bridal Couture." She designed over 1,500 custom wedding, evening, and debutante gowns from 1981 to 1991. Her designs have been featured in *People* magazine and seen on the *CBS Evening News*.

Inspired by the birth of her son, Spencer Arthur Sacks, in 1990, Paula developed a successful line of baby and toddler clothing and accessories that she continues to market under the name of "Baby Sacks designs by paula sacks."

Paula's son, Spencer, graduated from UCLA, on June 17, 2012. Not long afterwards, Paula and Frank relocated outside Austin, Texas (after living in Los Angeles for over 30 years), where Paula continues to create and sell her *Baby Sacks* "gift basket collections" to corporations throughout the United States.

Paula's son, Spencer, lives in West Los Angeles, CA, and he works for *Fox Sports 1* as a Production Assistant on the lot of 20th Century Fox in Century City, CA.



Above, 1990—Paula (Sell) Sacks holding 9-month old Spencer on a cruise in the Caribbean islands.

Below, October 10, 2010—Paula and Frank Sacks, with their son, Spencer, at a UCLA Parent's Day.



At left, Paula Sacks' former Bridal Studio she owned in Beverly Hills, CA, in the 1980s.



ROD SELL



Above, Rod's Press Photo

Rodney Lee Sell always wanted to be a leader, and he wanted to make things better. Initially his goal was to be a public representative. Toward that goal, he was Senior Class President and quarterback of the Springfield Parkview High School football team.

At Parkview, Rod was influenced greatly by the school's legendary speech coach, Bob Bilyeu. "Mr. Bilyeu" became his mentor and encouraged him to focus on Dramatic Interpretation (a high school speech tournament event).

With Mr. Bilyeu's guidance, Rod went on to win first in Missouri his senior year and fourth at Nationals. Although earning a theatre scholarship to Missouri State University for the next year, Rod switched to public affairs and pre-law. During his senior year at MSU, Rod was elected student body president.

Graduating from MSU, Rod was making his next plans at the time his mom, Jana Lea, was dying in Kansas City. Rod remembers that his mom knew he loved acting and told him: "...to chase after your dream and I will always be in your audience."

While at MSU, Rod took his first TV job at Springfield's KY-3. The station wanted to put Rod on camera but he preferred production, and the job became the start of his TV production career. A contact

from KY-3 helped Rod get a TV production job in Chicago at WCFC-TV. He studied acting at night at the Lois Hall Studio (completing the two-year Stanford Meisner technique program). Then Rod started doing plays; and with good reviews, he got his first agent and started doing commercials, training films and even more theater. That led to parts in the feature films, *Ground Hog Day*, and *Home Alone II*, plus roles in TV movies and episodes, lots of commercials and over fifty plays. The most visible commercial of late has been the Allstate Insurance "My Bad."

In 1993, Rod married Anne Brody in Chicago; they divorced, however, in 1998, after which Rod moved to Los Angeles to pursue his career there.

Desiring to be a leader and a positive force, Rod talks openly about the alcohol abuse by both of his parents, by himself and other family members. But Rod says "...I wish to speak to my own journey...I chose to get sober on January 30, 2002. I am an active and grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous... helping and giving back when I can."



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Above, Rod in the 2012 Allstate Insurance TV commercial called "My Bad"

Jenné Lynne Sell—After high school, Jenné (pronounced Jen-nuh) trained as a nurse, and she worked in the medical field as a Surgical Technologist specializing in the Oral-Maxillofacial field for 15 years in Springfield. While in Springfield, she married a local contractor, Morris Dock. The marriage yielded a very beautiful and talented child, Danyal Lea Dock, in 1979.

In 1995, Jenné followed her siblings, Paula and Rodney, to Los Angeles. For eight years, she had a fascinating career working as a Craft Service crew member on TV film sets. She met and formed friendships with quite a few stars while on the set.

In 2011, Jenné returned to Missouri and specifically St. Louis, to be near her daughter, Danyal, who was pursuing her own career goals in fashion, like her Aunt Paula. Danyal married Rob Timmermann, a St. Louis entrepreneur, in 2012, and on September 12, 2013, they had a son, Paxton.

Since Paxton's birth, Grandma Jenné started what she calls her "best job ever." That is as Paxton's "Nana J." Danyal has left retailing to join Rob in his business, the Timmermann Group, and *Nana J* provides them with so much job flexibility with the care of "Pax."

{Note from Jenné's Uncle Ken Brown--Jenné is about as unique a person as you can find. She can find peace in the middle of St. Louis or in an isolated cabin in the woods. Also while in Springfield, she was very much a part of the local music scene, and now with my older son, Kelly, involved in the same scene, we meet many people who remember Jenné}.



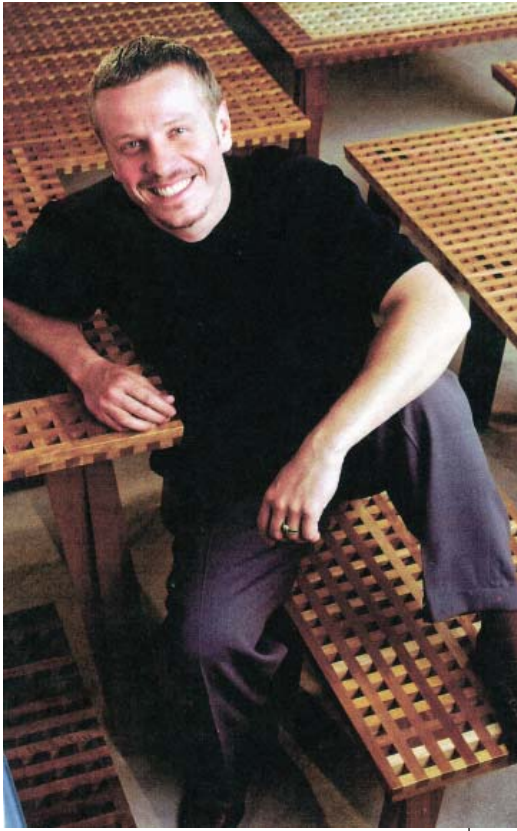
Above, Jenné (on right) with her daughter, Danyal (Dock) Timmermann.

Below, Danyal (Dock) Timmermann with her son, Paxton—Sept. 2014.



At left, Phillip Sell and his wife, Tracie (Lunow) Sell.





Above, Phillip among some of his furniture creations.

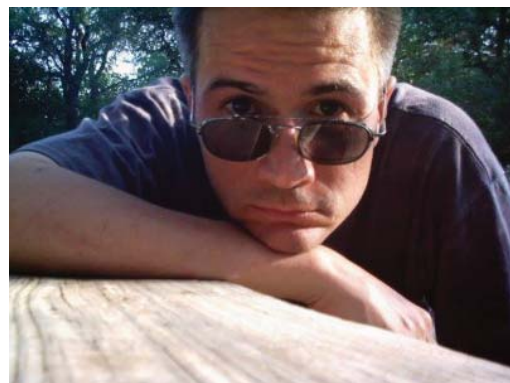
Phillip Larry Sell—graduated from Kansas City’s Bishop Miege High School. After his mother died in 1981, Phillip went to Austin, TX, to live. With both his parents being talented and professional artists, Phillip has been blessed with the ability to create. Phillip lives in the artistic community of Wimberley, TX, with his wife, Tracie Lunow Sell. Wimberley is southwest of Austin.

For well over 30 years, Phillip has been creating fabulous custom solid wood furniture in his studio/workshop. Phillip sees the world a little differently, just like his mother’s, that is; from an artists point of view.

John “Skip” Vasconcellos will always be his mother’s little boy. He was only eleven when his mother died. Skip was adopted by a couple (Phil and Elaine) through the Big Brothers organization, and he went to live with them in Independence just outside of Kansas City. After Skip’s graduation from Independence William Chrisman High School, he went into construction.

At one point a few years ago, Skip went to Hawaii to connect with his dad’s family. It was on that trip that he learned his father had died.

Presently Skip works in retailing and lives in Fort Pierce, Florida, where he can enjoy the sun and the beach.



Above and at left
John “Skip” Vasconcellos.

At right, December, 2013—Paula (Sell) Sacks' son, Spencer, racing a Lamborghini as his Christmas present. Standing at left is Spencer's Uncle Rod Sell. A fun time.



At left, Sept. 2014 in St. Louis, MO—Danyal (Dock) Timmermann, Paula (Sell) Sacks, and Jenné Sell (with Paxton Timmermann in stroller).

Above, Phillip, Jenné and Rod Sell with Jenné's daughter, Danyal (Dock) Timmermann celebrating at Danyal's wedding on February 24, 2012, in St. Louis, MO.

