



# Janet Ferguson

APR 30, 1928 - DEC 16, 2023



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## Janet Ferguson Obituary

Janet Ferguson, of Oberlin, Ohio, passed away December 16, 2023 of natural causes, surrounded by three generations of family and many friends. She was 95.

Janet was born April 30, 1928, in Detroit, MI to Clifford M. Toohy, a lawyer, and Helen Safford Toohy, an accomplished musician and piano instructor. She grew up in Highland Park, Michigan at a time when that city was the center of Ford Motor Company's automobile assembly operations. Although descending from a long line of distinguished University of Michigan graduates, following her graduation from Highland Park High School, she chose to attend Oberlin College, receiving a Bachelor's degree in English Literature in 1950. After her college graduation, she enrolled in the School of Social Work at Columbia University in New York, receiving a Master's degree in Social Work in 1952.

Janet's professional career took her from Columbia to Kansas City, Missouri, where she accepted a counseling position at a local community youth center. While working there she met Ed Ferguson, a young lawyer who occasionally volunteered coaching youth sports at the center. The two were married in 1955, and initially settled in Parkville, Missouri. In 1961, now with two young sons (Mark, born 1958 and Martin "Tim", born 1959), the family moved from Missouri to Kalamazoo, Michigan, where Ed (now a teacher) could work in a sophisticated and progressive public school system and where Janet might resume her social work career. A third son, Andrew "Sandy" was born in 1968.

Janet was a true pioneer among the working women of her day. She worked professionally in Michigan throughout the time she also raised her family, for many years as a senior social worker at the State of Michigan's Fort Custer State Home for the Developmentally Disabled, and later with several private agencies focused on advancing the interests of developmentally disabled children and adults. She received multiple awards and commendations for her work during this time, and ultimately founded Care Cooperative Consultants, a private firm devoted to supporting



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the families of special needs children which she ran until her retirement. Like her mother, she was an excellent pianist and vocalist, and was an avid amateur artist as well.

Janet's experiences at Oberlin and Columbia made an everlasting impression on her, and shaped her approach to life more than anything else. As a member of Oberlin College's UNESCO Committee, and its Cosmopolitan Club, she developed a strong interest in international cultures. While at Columbia, she lived at the famed International House – a residence created after World War I to attract students of all walks of life and from around the world with the goals of creating cross-cultural exchange and enhancing international peace and understanding. Throughout the rest of her life, the friendships she made during those years endured, and she remained in regular touch with fellow graduates from India, Germany, the Netherlands and Japan well into her late years. She traveled as often and for as long as her health permitted, to destinations near and far.

Janet's time in Oberlin, living at the Kendal community, was the natural extension of her fondly remembered Oberlin College experiences and friendships. Together with several of her classmates, she retired to a place where she knew that she would be with good friends, and where they would have access to the rich tapestry of intellectual discourse, music and the arts that the College provides to the community. She also saw her new home as a place where she could contribute, and contribute she did – as a soprano in her church choir, as organizer of a pottery program for her fellow Kendal residents, as a volunteer caretaker at the daycare center, as a Meals on Wheels delivery driver, and in many other ways. She will be missed by her family, and by the many friends whose lives she touched.

Janet's husband Ed predeceased her in 1979, as did her sister Phyllis House earlier in 2023. She is survived by her three sons, Mark (Elizabeth Yntema), Tim (Gloria Bianchi) and Sandy (Heather McMaster) as well as five grandchildren and one great grandchild.

To send flowers  
to the family or plant a tree  
in memory of Janet Ferguson, please visit our floral store.

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## Tribute Wall

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**A Memorial Tree Was Planted For Janet Ferguson** posted:

A Memorial Tree was planted for Janet Ferguson We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ the staff at Dicken Funeral Home & Cremation Service Join in honoring their life - plant a memorial tree

January 29 at 9:45 AM



# **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Janet by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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