



# **Ann S. Livingston**

DEC 10, 1931 - JUL 16, 2020



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## **Ann S. Livingston**

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### **A**nn Livingston Obituary

Ann Robertson (Smyers) Livingston of Oberlin, Ohio, passed away on July 16, 2020, after a long battle with a recurrence of breast cancer. She was 88 years old. The daughter of William Hays Smyers and Harriet Virginia (Arthur) Smyers, Ann was born on Dec. 10, 1931, in Washington, D.C. Her father was a research chemist with Standard Oil Co (later Exxon) who nourished that same scientific ability and curiosity in Ann. She was raised in Westfield, NJ, and graduated from Cornell University in 1953 with a BS degree in Home -Economics with an emphasis in chemistry, nutrition and childhood development. While at Cornell, Ann met the love of her life, Dayton Edward Livingston. They married in June 1952 and embarked on a happy, productive and fortunate life together for 68 years until her death. They had six children. In the early years of their marriage, they first lived in Fanwood, NJ, and then Birmingham, MI, while Dayton embarked on a career with General Motors. Dissatisfied with suburban living and the time demands on a rising executive at GM, they sought an alternative setting in a small college town. This led to their move to Oberlin in 1962, when Dayton began a career with Oberlin College that culminated as Vice President of Business and Finance. Ann was ahead of her time in many areas. She was an early proponent of a return to natural childbirth and breast-feeding and advocated vigorously for both. Having been deprived of a natural childbirth or the presence of her husband in the delivery room during the birth of several of her children, she purposefully had her last child at home in 1966. Enlightened about pesticides by her chemist father, Ann had an interest in organic gardening since the 1950s. She roamed neighborhood streets in Birmingham on trash day to collect grass clippings for use as mulch in her garden. In Oberlin, she persuaded Dayton to “go back to the land” in 1965, when they purchased a 31 acre farm on the edge of town where they could raise their own food organically. A proficient organizer, Ann



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planned and managed an extensive vegetable garden, along with perennial flower gardens that bloomed throughout the growing season. Taking full advantage of the child labor law exemption on a family farm, she made daily job lists for her six children, six days a week all summer, assigning some cleaning and much weeding and mulching. She canned or froze the bounty from the garden. In the fall, she persuaded the City of Oberlin to divert some of its collected leaves from the landfill to the back of her garden for use as mulch. Not content with organically raised eggs, beef and pork, she prevailed upon Dayton to “allow” a milk cow, to which he had been adamantly opposed because cows had to be milked twice a day and there could be no vacations with a cow. Ann recruited several of her close friends to commit to the backup milking task. She got her Jersey cow and the thick dollop of cream for her coffee. Ann was a true Renaissance woman, an ardent individualist with a ready and heart-felt laugh. She was a fountain of knowledge on many subjects and skilled in an assortment of things, some typical for her generation of women, others not. A gifted seamstress, she sewed and altered beautiful wedding dresses, knitted marvelous sweaters, cross-stitched with aplomb, and created the Peter Pindar Pease Cabin square in the Oberlin Quilt that hangs in Mudd Library. She dabbled in jewelry making, re-pointed bricks, plastered walls, hung wallpaper, refinished furniture, and designed her own smoker for curing bacon and ham. She could rewire a three-way switch and change a tire. She could identify all manner of plants, birds and insects. She was fascinated by and could talk at length about constellations, physics, black holes, solar energy, medicine and nutrition. When she had her first hip replacement, she sought to have her removed bone saved and returned to her, so she could examine it. Before the operation she placed a Post-it note on that hip with a reminder to the surgeon to “Return to Sender.” He did (in a jar of formaldehyde)! Ann organized and reveled in large parties and gatherings. She loved hosting their annual Christmas parties, Oberlin College-related entertainment functions, and wedding ceremonies and receptions at home for three daughters and family friends. She particularly loved family reunions and summer barbecue parties with the families of their close friends. She was exceedingly proud of her brood. She wanted them to be bright, happy, good, fair and honest, and hoped that in some way they



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would make the world a better place. She was active in many causes and activities in Oberlin. She was a member of the First Church in Oberlin. She created a babysitting co-op and was a leader in the International Foods dinner club. She was President and Treasurer of the local American Field Service chapter and led fundraisers for its student exchange program, having hosted four foreign students in her own home. She volunteered for Allen/Mercy Hospital for many years. She coordinated bed and breakfast fundraisers for several different groups that took advantage of the room scarcity in town at busy times for Oberlin College. She devoted large amounts of time to the Oberlin Heritage Center and its related corporation that controlled historic Oberlin properties, serving on the board of each and as treasurer of the corporation. As Ann's death approached, a niece related an African proverb "When an elder dies, a library burns," then added, "I think we're losing the one in Alexandria, again." Ann is survived by her husband, Dayton; her brother, William H. Smyers, Jr. (Mary Anne) of Wethersfield, CT; her sister Margaret Arthur (Smyers) Wolf, of Carlisle, PA; her children Sheryl Krauser (Larry) of Spokane, WA; Anna Lorraine Livingston of Oberlin; Bruce Livingston (Jean) of Boise, ID; Charles Livingston (Susan Argyle) of Plano, TX; Douglas Livingston (Carolyn) of Boonville, CA; and Harriet Kerwin (Sean) of Hackettstown, NJ. In addition, Ann is survived by numerous nieces and nephews, 12 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her parents and her sister, Flora Bell (Smyers) Lathrop of Los Altos, CA. Due to the coronavirus epidemic, the family will hold a memorial service at some time in the future when they may travel and gather together safely, hence this tribute-like obituary. Burial of her ashes will be in the New Russia Township Cemetery. The family expresses enduring and deep gratitude to the dedicated and compassionate care-givers at Kendal at Oberlin and Crossroads Hospice and Palliative Care. In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made to the Oberlin Heritage Center, <http://www.oberlinheritagecenter.org/getinvolved/makeagift>.

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



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## Tribute Wall

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**Janet Lowe Olear** posted:

What fond memories of Ann, & the Livingstons, as I grew up in Oberlin with Harriet until I was 12. She was an amazing lady full of knowledge & love.

July 24 at 8:00 PM



**Jane Lisa** posted:

Harriet and Livingston Family, My sincere condolences on your loss. Prayers for love, comfort and peace as you grieve. I really enjoyed reading the tribute that you all wrote about your mother and was so happy that you decided it was OK to leave it long and full of detail :) I feel like I really a got to know your Mom a little better and what an extraordinary woman and Mother she was! How blessed you all were to share your life with her. God bless Ann and may she rest in peace.

July 24 at 8:00 PM



# Memories only last if you share them

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



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