



Nevelyn J. Knisley

July 21, 1929 - July 23, 2015

July 23, 2015, in the late afternoon sunshine, Nevelyn J. Knisley, age 86, passed away. She was listening to Handel's Messiah and holding the hand of Roger, her husband of 62 years.

For those who knew her, death marked the sad but long anticipated end to a life cruelly shortened and disabled by Alzheimer's disease. Diagnosed in her 70's, Nevelyn died at 86. The tragedy for those of us who lived with her for nearly a decade as she ceased to function, to recognize, to respond, is that we marked her death with every day that she lived.

Born July 21, 1929 to Clara and Harry Theobald, Nevelyn grew up on a farm, in a one-stop-light-town in central Ohio. Her parents met as teachers before coming home to take over the family farm. Despite the Depression, private lessons in piano and art were provided for both girls. Graduating at the top of her class, Nevelyn won a scholarship to Oberlin Conservatory where she thrived under the guidance of pianists Frank Shaw and Emil Danenberg, and voice instructor Robert Fountain. Nevelyn received a Master of Fine Arts from Ohio State University in Athens, before returning to Oberlin to teach for

Danenberg while he was on sabbatical. When he returned, she accepted a position at Lebanon Valley College, in Annville, Pennsylvania where she taught piano for the next 39 years.

During her years at the college, Nevelyn was sought out as a soloist, accompanist, chamber musician, and adjudicator. She also spent nearly 40 years working closely with composer and fellow faculty member Thomas Lanese, facilitating the performances and often debuts of his choral, orchestral, and chamber works. Thomas, who passed away in 2004, was one of her dearest friends and most challenging colleagues. Mr. Lanese was married to Denise, who was the daughter of the late French conductor Pierre Monteux, founder of the Monteux School of Conducting in Lamoine, Maine.

In 1988, LVC created an annual award in Nevelyn's honor for Instructional Excellence and Community Service. She served as Faculty Advisor to the musical sorority Sigma Alpha Iota. In addition to her college classes, she taught private lessons from home, having as many as twenty students, age five to sixty-five. With a comfortably full waiting list, she did not hold back from firing students, of any age, who hadn't caught fire.

A member of the Annville United Methodist Church, Nevelyn sang soprano in the choir, taught Sunday school classes, acted as music coordinator, and when badgered into it, acted as Sunday school pianist and choir director.

Little known to most, was the fact that Nevelyn was fearless in the face of

spiders and bats, had a soft place for long-haired cats, grew magnificent tomatoes even when it meant digging up the lawn, was an agile ping pong player, a speedy and tireless walker, an inhaler of books, a lover of modern music (a point of frustration with her husband), composed 5 exceptionally funny and brilliant pieces of which she never published because the publisher asked to see more...., and was an aficionado of the sunbath taken indoors, in the late afternoon, during the long low light of a winter sun slanting in through a storm door.

Nevelyn is survived by husband, Roger, daughters Valerie & Dee Knisley, their spouses Jean Marc Braem and John Ruger, her sister Eileen Gossard and husband Jack, and by a community of students, musicians, and listeners, whose lives have been made richer through their relationship with her.

She will be missed most by her husband for her companionship and by the rest of us, for filling the house with music, for sharing a life in Pennsylvania and on the coast of Maine, and for being a loving, fair-minded, liberally spirited, vigorous, gifted musician, teacher, mother and wife, and for creating her own path in the sun, from which she never wavered, choosing to sing her own tune even in these last ten years when the rest of us couldn't follow it....

Monday, July 27th, there will be visitation with the family from 10-11, a memorial service at 11am with a luncheon to follow. All events will take place at the United Methodist Church, 1 N. College Avenue, Annville PA 17003. Offerings of music will be given by Dr. Robert C. Lau, organ. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to the United Methodist Church above. Letters of

condolence may be sent to Roger Knisley, PO Box 125 Cornwall PA 17016.
Arrangements are being handled by Kreamer Funeral Home in Annville.

PDF Printable Version