



# Jan Keene Muhlert

OCT 4, 1942 - MAY 9, 2020



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## **Jan Keene Muhlert**

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**J**an Keene Muhlert, 77, of Boalsburg, PA, died May 9th in Germantown, TN at the home of her son after a long valiant battle with cancer.

Born October 4th, 1942 in Oakpark, IL she was the daughter of the late William H Keene and Isabel J Cole. On January 1, 1966, in Oberlin, OH, she married Christopher Layton Muhlert who passed away January 3, 2017.

She is survived by her son Michael Muhlert and his two children, Ella and Evan Muhlert; and brother Jon Keene and his wife Loann and their children, Susan Seutter and Linda Fagan and by her close friend Becky Houts.

Jan was a tireless wife and mother. She supported her husband and son's passions while always excelling in her work. She would work all day and still come home to make dinner, clean house, help with homework and work in the yard. She cared for her husband through his cancer and heart surgery while continuing to work. She would frequently end her days late at night nodding off to sleep in front of the TV. In her younger years, she studied in France and spoke French fluently. She played cornet and guitar. She was an accomplished artist. Besides her husband's work, her favorite artist was Georgia O'Keefe.

She held a Master of Arts in art history from Oberlin College and a Bachelor of Arts from Albion College, Michigan. Her passion was American art. Jan had almost 50 years of museum experience, having previously worked at the Smithsonian Institution as a curator, and at the University of Iowa Museum of Art, Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth and most recently, the Palmer Museum of Art in State College, as Director. She retired in December 2016 after 20 years at the Palmer. She had been active in both the Association of Art Museum Directors and the American Alliance of Museums, holding several leadership positions. In State College, PA she had served on the board of directors for the Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts and the steering committee for Partners in Public Service, a collaborative project with Penn State University Libraries and Public Broadcasting.



## Obituary

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The family wishes to thank Jan's care giver Oretha Marshall for her commitment and care.

In the setting of the current global pandemic, a memorial service will follow in State College, PA when the current health crisis allows.



## Tribute Wall

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KG

**Kathy Goodale** posted:

Mrs. Muhlert was an inspiration to many - an accomplished curator with a keen eye and sense of humor - nothing got by her! I am truly thankful I had the privilege to work for her at The Carter Museum. Kathy GoodaleWeatherford, Texas

August 15 at 5:57 PM

FC

**Flora Carter** posted:

I had hoped to contact Jan but was sorry to see that she had passed. I worked for Jan many years ago as an assistant when she was curating 20th century art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in the 1970s. She was a wonderfully intelligent, modest, well-organized, good-humored person who got things done. A great boss and colleague. My condolences to family and friends.

June 30 at 9:58 PM

LL

**Lauren Leatherbarrow** posted:

I too got to know Jan when she was in Philadelphia doing Proton treatments in the summer of 2019- she stayed at my house through the "Hosts for Hospitals" program. I really enjoyed her company and I hope she did mine. I was thinking about her the other day when I was cutting back some perennials in this one spot in my front garden where she would sit on the porch and I was planting and we were talking. She recommended I put a sculpture or art piece there - I had a neat piece of twisty tree branch that had to do in the meantime. I thought it odd that I hadn't heard from her and although we only knew each other a short time I considered her my friend, my condolences to friends and family. Has anybody got the lemon cake recipe to share? She made it for me once. Lauren Leatherbarrow

December 6 at 5:34 AM

CV

**Christine Dunn Vaccarelli** posted:

Jan and I became Penn Proton friends last July when my husband and she were undergoing Proton radiation therapy. We connected the 1st day we met and looked for each other frequently. The video I took of her ringing the bell on the day of her last radiation treatment came up in my memories today. It's how I learned of her passing. It made me very sad. It was a pleasure and a privilege to know Jan. She was a modest woman in spite of her accomplishments. Our conversations were so fulfilling. She inspired my husband and I to push through a very difficult time. She was a tough cookie! She gave me something to look forward to each visit. Jan certainly lead a full and meaningful life. I have no doubt she has eternal peace now. We extend our deepest condolences to the family.Christine and John Vaccarelli

August 7 at 6:12 AM



## Tribute Wall

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DW

**David Werner** posted:

I just found out about Jan's passing. Over the years I served on both the advisory board and the friends board at the Palmer. Jan always impressed me with her understanding of the museum world and her knowledge about American art. We met often to discuss museum affairs and I don't think she ever mentioned personal difficulties so her passing came as a total surprise. She will be remembered by me and many others in State College as an essential part of our art family. We were sorry to see her retire but understood that she led the museum with a period of growth physically and with membership. Her relationship with Barbara and Jim Palmer was the special ingredient that made the Palmer Museum. It is with sadness but with many fond memories that I receive this news. David Werner

June 25 at 2:24 AM

WS

**William Van Swearingen** posted:

My wife and I send our condolences to the families of Jan Keene Muhlert's passing May 8, 2020 and her husband Chris Muhlert January 3, 2017, in particular their son Michael and his immediate family. Jan spent her junior year in Paris from Albion College where she got to know my wife, Denise. When college officials sought a new advisor for the French house on campus, Jan recommended Denise who got the job in 1964-65. I got my first college teaching job at Albion the same year. Today 55 years later my wife and I are still together, living our retirement in France. We are sad to learn of Jan's husband's passing in 2017. Jan was always generous, kind and willing to be of service. Her husband was the same. After they moved to Washington, we followed them. There we had many happy moments together as friends: enjoying, meals, holiday and birthday celebrations and of course their son's birth. After the couple moved to Texas for Jan to begin a career in museum directorships, we lost contact and they with us. However, they are still a significant part of our lives. A fond farewell to both Jan and Chris Muhlert. May you rest in peace.

June 2 at 8:28 AM

BS

**Beverly Sutley** posted:

My condolences to Michael and other members of Jan's family. I valued working with her for nearly 20 years at the Palmer, and am sorry to hear of her passing.

May 28 at 5:22 AM



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

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



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