



Janis Parker

January 26, 1934 - October 24, 2020

Janis Parker, of Durham, N.C., was born on January 26, 1934, in Springfield, Vt., to Maude and Robert Parker and died on October 24, 2020, in Tallahassee, Fla.

She lived a life of art and learning, earning a BFA from Rhode Island School of Design and a master's degree in education from UNC-Greensboro.

She established the first successful rural arts program and council at Rockingham County in 1969, and as a higher education administrator and consultant, helped create arts and community development programs throughout the North Carolina and Virginia Piedmont. As a program director at the Stokes County Arts Council, she worked to create the Dan River Art Market and helped students of all ages discover and develop their own creativity. In 1999, she started work at the EPA's campus in Research Triangle Park, where she furthered her commitment to the environment and love of nature.

She showed her art at Chapel Hill's Somerhill Gallery, and worked in many artistic media — painting, felting and fabrics. She transformed odd pieces of furniture into bright storytellers, and reviewers marveled at her ability to find elegance and magic in ordinary materials.

Her curiosity led her to travel extensively and devour stacks of library books from authors around the world. Friends enjoyed her keen observation and sharp wit, which often revealed some hidden beauty, novel perspective, or delightful absurdity.

She was an active member of the Congregation at Duke University Chapel and later St. Stephen Lutheran Church, and loved gardening, cinema, and spending time with her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and many friends.

She is survived by daughters Cecily Durrett Kalkhof (Bill) of Durham, N.C., and Jennifer Newton Buchanan (Tom) of Tallahassee, Fla.; son, NC Senator Paul Robert Newton (Melanie) of Mt. Pleasant, N.C.; seven grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Her family will gather for a celebration of life service online Friday, November 6, 2020.

Breanna Green of Bevis Funeral Home is assisting the family with their arrangements. (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com)

Tribute Wall

DB

“ I first met Janis as a colleague working for EPA. We worked in the office dedicated to improving air quality. After retiring, Janis and four other former EPAers formed a group for creating textile art. We visited local museums and met in our homes to create a new project every month. When Janis hosted, she always provided tea and a fabulous dessert.

Janis offered fresh ideas and new techniques to our group. She also told delightful stories. She was always ready to laugh, and brought a special joy to our small group. I will remember her for her joy, ready wit, and eagerness to explore new places and things.

Dianne Byrne - November 05, 2020 at 08:43 PM

BD

“*Janis was one of the most vibrant and alive people I have known. She was so creative and always had an upbeat attitude about life despite any problems she might be having. She truly loved all her family and her grandchildren. It always amazed me that she was so knowledgeable about so many things and always up on current affairs. Janis inspired me and others to be better people. She loved her garden and it brought much joy to many of her neighbors. She was one of our Creative Ladies group. Janis could always look at every project in an usual way and come up with something so very exciting and different. She was the same age as my mother, but it never felt that way when she was around. She was so full of life and such a foodie. Thank you for caring for her over the last few years. We have missed her greatly, but knew that she was happier being with her family.*”



Barbara Driscoll - November 01, 2020 at 08:06 PM

DB

I first met Janis as a colleague working at EPA. We were both in the office dedicated to improving air quality. After retiring, Janis, three of our friends, and I formed a group for creating textile art. We visited local museums and met in our homes to create a new project every month. When Janis hosted, she always provided tea and a fabulous dessert. Janis brought fresh ideas and new techniques to our group, and she always had the most delightful stories to tell. She was always ready with a laugh and shared her joy in living. I will remember her for her joy, ready wit, and eagerness to explore new places and things.

Dianne Byrne - November 05, 2020 at 02:17 PM

MS

“ Another of Janis' talents was gift giving. I remember her getting presents ready to send to you all. Each one special to the talents or likes of her children. (I'm remembering a trumpet for the music store). My house is replete with her creative gifts for birthdays and Christmas over a 40 some yr. period. I was sitting and thinking about her (and you) and started looking around the house: blue glass vase on the window sill, pottery serving bowl, holy water font from France, glass balls hanging in the kitchen window, even 2 very fancy note pads which I am still using. I could go to Tues. Morning store with her and never see anything appropriate until she pointed it out to me.

Janis shared her talents with us without reserve. What a hole has been created by her death. May she rest in peace. Martha Stucker

Martha Stucker - October 30, 2020 at 02:11 PM

SG

“ Sending love and our deepest condolences to you all in your time of loss. I was mesmerized by your dear Mom. And so happy that she and my Mom remained friends through the years. Your Mom was so beautiful, creative and fun. As a child I recall being at your house was like visiting a modern art show. And I have a vivid Easter memory when taking our family pictures in your yard in front of an amazing snowball bush. Lavender or blue colors I think. We walked down the Patrick Street sidewalk to get to this perfect backdrop in your yard. Somehow I FELL INTO THE flowering bush and heard all these cracking sounds. Someone pulled me out of it. My mother was mortified that I destroyed part of the bush, but your Mother was very kind and gracious about the bush destruction. I was about 6 years old. And I have the black and white photos of the " before I fell" Easter family picture. Love to all. Sally Gordon (Groseclose)

Sally Gordon - October 27, 2020 at 10:56 AM

SW

“ I first met Janis when she came to work for us at EPA. With her rich background and love of nature, as described in the obituary, she was an especially welcome asset professionally in a variety of ways, especially being helpful in the area of communications. In addition, she became a very close friend. There was a group of about five of us that got together routinely after retirement to work on creative projects and go on outings. She was very generous with us, providing wise advice for getting along with life and sharing with us ideas for improving our creative projects. We missed her a great deal after she moved to Florida, but were so glad to see how happy she was living there. She often spoke lovingly of all three of her children and her appreciation for the help each provided to her as she was aging. And of course she was very proud of each of her grandchildren, telling us each time one would come for a visit and the good times she enjoyed with them.
I will always remember her and be grateful for her friendship.

Susan Wyatt - October 27, 2020 at 07:41 AM

LG

“ Janis always did things with a smile. I am so great full that we were able to spend an afternoon together last February. Janis will be deeply missed.



Linda Gauger - October 26, 2020 at 03:31 PM