

GH-R

12-13-2022

Jean Ketter



Jean Ketter, emerita professor of education at Grinnell College, died December 8, 2022. Jean lived and loved deeply, leaving a legacy of positive impact on the countless people she touched.

A native of Norton, Kansas, Jean attended the University of Kansas, where she met the love of her life, David. Married in 1971, Jean and David moved on together to the University of Northern Colorado, where

Jean completed her undergraduate studies, before settling in Atchison, Kansas, where they raised their two children, Anne and Peter.

Always a dedicated educator, Jean taught English and journalism at Atchison High School for 10 years, as well as night classes at an area community college. A tireless worker and lifelong learner, she would go on to earn her masters in English and PhD in English Education from the University of Kansas, while still teaching and raising her family. With her children off to college, Jean moved on to the second chapter of her career, spending 26 years as a professor of Education.

The primary focus of Jean's professional life was helping her students become kind and loving teachers. Students and colleagues alike saw her as a penetrating intellect with a passion for teaching, which she believed required both critical thinking and loving respect for the learner. Never static, she continuously evolved to meet new challenges, as she strove to broaden and improve the lives of her students. She challenged all of them to use education to enrich others' lives by becoming active and loving leaders in the classroom. Jean was also a fierce advocate for questioning the status quo, leading by example and encouraging her students to challenge authority, disrupt the system, and fight for justice and equity.

Outside of work, Jean was a loving wife, mother, grandmother, relative and friend to all who opened themselves to her, widely revered for her keen intelligence, kindness, joy, wit, and passion for life. She especially loved making and sharing music, whether in extended family sing-along sessions or in her more than 50 performances as a member of the Grinnell Oratoria. After retirement, she enjoyed taking voice lessons and participating in Vox Femina, a women's acapella group in Grinnell. She was an enthusiastic traveler, including an extended trip to South Africa and Lesotho on a Faculty Development Tour. Jean and David were also fond of bicycle tours, visiting Tuscany, Provence, Portugal, Vienna, Czech Republic, Ireland, Nova Scotia, and Slovenia, often joined by other family members and friends eager to share their company and experiences.

In everything she did, Jean brought an unwavering enthusiasm and boundless energy. Those who knew her will forever remember her deep compassion and empathy for all, fearless in the face of any injustice, but always filled with and guided by love. They will also remember her joie de vivre, embracing time with friends and family in conversation, song, and togetherness, and the last to leave any good party.

Jean is mourned by David Ketter, her husband of 53 years; her daughter Anne, son Peter and his wife Bridget Bird Ketter; her grandchildren Elijah and Alexandra Busse and Amelia Ketter; her brother Charles Smiley; myriad nieces, nephews, cousins and in-laws, and a wide array of friends. Her brother Stephens Smiley, sister Julia (Smiley) Richardson, and parents Wilmoth and Alice (Stephens) Smiley preceded her in death.

A graveside service and burial has been scheduled for 12:00 p.m. Saturday, December 17, at Westfield Cemetery, south of Grinnell.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations are suggested to Norton, Kansas, Library or Grinnell-Newburg School Foundation and mailed in care of the Smith Funeral Home, PO Box 368, Grinnell, IA 50112.

Jean Ketter

Jean Ketter, 72, of Grinnell, died on Dec. 8, 2022, at UnityPoint Grinnell Regional Medical Center.

A graveside service and burial has been scheduled for 12 noon Saturday, Dec. 17, at Westfield Cemetery, south of Grinnell.

Immediately following the service, the family invites friends to join them at a luncheon at the Grinnell College Golf Course.

Jean's full obituary appeared in the Monday, Dec. 12, edition of the Herald-Register.

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