



Mary Josephine Levenspiel

February 2, 1928 - March 24, 2024

Mary Jo Levenspiel (nee Smiley), 96, died peacefully of natural causes on March 24, 2024. Mary Jo was born in Independence, Oregon. Growing up, she and her parents, Frank and Phyllis Smiley, and her brother Jack lived in Portland, Bandon and Corvallis, Oregon. Mary Jo graduated from Corvallis High School in 1946 and started college at Oregon State University, where in 1947 she met Octave (Tavy) Levenspiel, a graduate student.

In 1949 she attended OHSU in Portland for nurses training and after five years of dating Tavy, he finally proposed and they were married in 1952 in Berkeley, California, where Mary Jo was working as a nurse and Tavy was conducting experiments for his PhD in Chemical Engineering.

From 1952 to 1954 Tavy was a professor at Oregon State University and Mary Jo gave up nursing to start raising a family. After Bekki was born in 1954, they moved to Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where Tavy taught at Bucknell University. Two sons were born: Barney (Joseph Bernard) in 1955 and Morris in 1958. Shortly after Morris' birth the family moved to Evanston, Illinois, where Tavy taught at IIT in Chicago and Mary Jo was busy raising three little kids.

Summer of 1962 they packed up the family in a VW microbus, drove to the west coast to visit relatives and ended up purchasing a 1917 beach house in Otter Rock, Oregon, which they named "Wentletrap". They then spent every

summer there, entertaining a steady stream of visitors from all over. This place was Mary Jo's favorite place in the whole world.

The family took their first of two, year-long sabbaticals to Cambridge, England, in 1963, the second in 1968. Being in Europe the family explored many countries, new customs and cultures. Between those two sabbaticals, Mary Jo was involved with the Peace Movement and worked at the Peace Center in Chicago. She also was a big advocate for Civil Rights and attended the Women's March in Washington DC in the 60's.

After returning from England in 1969, the family moved to Corvallis, Oregon. Between 1975 and 1983, Mary Jo earned a PhD in Child Psychology from Western Oregon State College (WOSC) in Monmouth and taught Psychology courses at WOSC.

After her 3 children had graduated from Corvallis High School, in 1976 Mary Jo accompanied Tavy on a year-long sabbatical traveling around the world, westbound, lecturing at universities and visiting family and friends. In 1984, Tavy and Mary Jo embarked on their last year-long sabbatical, heading eastbound around the world, stopping many places to lecture and visit family and friends.

Bekki married Keith Levien in 1987 and soon gave Mary Jo three grandsons: Kyle, Cody and Quincy. Mary Jo and Tavy were very active, attentive grandparents. In Corvallis Mary Jo enjoyed gardening, playing recorder, participating in her 'Book Club', and was involved in the League of Women Voters and other Civic groups.

Mary Jo had many gifts. Everyone who knew her would say that she was kind and polite and genuinely interested in the people she met. She was described as a "gentle-lady with a most pleasant disposition". She was very generous and made her home a welcoming place for her childrens' friends and her

husband's students and colleagues. Her passion was genealogy, which she studied into her 90's. She did extensive research into the Levenspiel and Smiley families, both very different.

In 2014, Mary Jo decided that she and Tavy were getting old and needed more help than they could receive living in their home, so they gave up driving and moved to a Continuous Care Retirement Community in Portland, Willamette View. After only 3 years Tavy died in 2017 and shortly thereafter Mary Jo moved back to Corvallis to be close to family.

Mary Jo was preceded in death by her husband, Octave, her parents, her brother, Jack Smiley, and by her son, Barney, in 2003. She is survived by her son, Morris (Teresa Clarke), her daughter, Bekki (Keith Levien), three grandsons, Kyle, Cody and Quincy Levien, two great-grandchildren, Wesley and Emma, and her cat, Daisy.

Please share your thoughts and memories for the family at www.demossturda.com and visit Levenspiel.com for more stories about Mary Jo and Octave Levenspiel.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN **22**. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (PT)

Corvallis Museum
411 SW 2nd Street
Corvallis, OR 97333

Tribute Wall

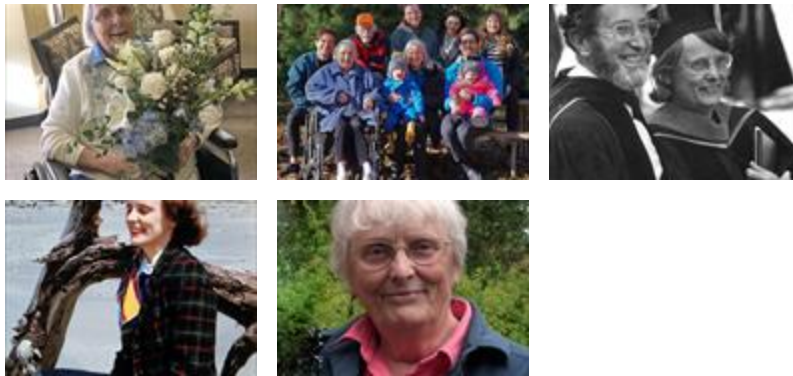
JM

“ *Mary Jo was a kind person. Always fun to be around and welcoming whenever we would see her. It was a blessing when Keith married Bekki and we became family. Mary Jo and Tavy were such interesting people and had stories to tell. It was always a pleasure to visit them. They will live on through their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Their lives were well lived.*

Joann mayfield - April 25, 2024 at 12:35 PM

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“ *8 files added to the album Photos*



Rebecca Levien - April 06, 2024 at 02:32 PM

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“ 4 files added to the album *Mary Jo's Life*



Rebecca Levien - April 06, 2024 at 01:45 PM