



Mary Martha James Swanson

August 30, 1944 - March 10, 2025

Mary Martha James Swanson passed away peacefully on Monday, March 10, 2025, at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center. She was surrounded by her family including her husband Parker, sons Erik and Karl, sisters Deloris James and Sarah Skerker, and faithful certified therapy dog Lola.

Mary was born August 30, 1944 in Ottumwa, Iowa to George and Louise James. George was deployed on a US Navy ship in the Pacific when Louise learned of her pregnancy; he was both stunned and delighted when Louise was finally able to contact him by telephone! Mary grew up in a community that treasured music, and she fell in love with music while still a young girl. She mastered piano and violin. After high school she studied at Drake University and the University of Redlands, qualifying as an elementary-school teacher. In 1967 she enrolled in graduate studies at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, where a fellow student, Parker Swanson, quickly recognized how special she was. Mary and Parker were wed in September, 1968, beginning 56 years of their very, very close marriage. Mary built her career in piano performing and teaching in California, Washington, and Corvallis; she inspired hundreds of students. She was an enthusiastic member of the Oregon Music Teachers' Association. She continued teaching lovingly and playing beautifully until just a few days before her sudden, fatal illness. She enjoyed flower-gardening, sewing, and cooking. In her younger years, Mary was a Masters Swimmer. She and Parker backpacked in the Sierra and Rocky mountains, and sailed the inland waters of Washington.

A simple public memorial service will be scheduled at First United Methodist Church of Corvallis. The service will feature performances of two of Mary's favorite piano works: a Bach prelude and a Schubert impromptu. In lieu of flowers, Mary's friends are invited to contribute to musiclinkfoundation.org. Anyone with questions is invited to contact parkerwswanson@gmail.com.