

MARJORIE DEFRIES OBITUARY



Following seven months of exemplary hospice care, Marjorie Jacobs DeFries passed peacefully in her Boulder home on New Year's Eve, 2022. Marge was born in Chicago, Illinois, the middle child of Frank and Esther Jacobs, with older siblings Dorothy and Norman, and younger fraternal-twin siblings, Charles and Lois.

She attended Chicago public schools and graduated with honors from Taft High School in 1952. She then attended Wright Junior College for two years, where she excelled academically while working various part-time jobs. She then received a two-year scholarship in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, where she majored in Spanish and French, and graduated with honors and membership in Phi Beta Kappa.

During the fall semester of her senior year, she had a blind date with a College of Agriculture student who was planning to apply for admission to Graduate School at the University of Illinois. She was apparently smitten and possibly intrigued by a continuing academic affiliation. The following summer, John began Graduate School and he and Marge were married on August 18, 1956.

During John's subsequent four years of Graduate School, six months of active military duty, and six years as a faculty member in the College of Agriculture, she served in staff positions in various academic units at the University, including the Institute for Research on Exceptional Children. The Director of that Institute, Professor Samuel Kirk, coined the term "learning disabilities" during that period and advocated their diagnosis, remediation and the study of their inheritance.

In 1963-64, she took a leave of absence from that position to spend a delightful year at the University of California, Berkeley, where she worked in the Chancellor's office and John conducted research in the Departments of Genetics and Psychology that fostered his nascent interest in the new field of behavioral genetics. Two years later, their

lives were changed substantially when Craig joined their family, and John subsequently accepted a position as a faculty member in the recently founded Institute for Behavioral Genetics (IBG), University of Colorado. Then, a year after their move to Boulder, Cathy made their family complete. In 1971, John spent a semester on a Faculty Fellowship in the Departments of Genetics and Psychology, University of Hawaii, and a year later co-founded the Hawaii Family Study of Cognition.

Consequently, the family spent one month each summer during the next five years in Oahu and visited the other islands. Seven years later, they began to re-visit the islands and did so at least once each year through 2019, including Cathy's and Sean's Kona wedding in 2000. In 1973, the Colorado Family Reading Study was initiated at IBG. Because of Marge's previous experience in the field of learning disabilities, she was employed as an IBG staff person to test subjects in that study. The successful completion of that study was followed by the subsequent funding of the Colorado Reading Project in 1979 and the current Colorado Learning Disabilities Research Center.

Marge was then admitted to Graduate School in the CU Department of Linguistics and received her MA degree in 1978. She was then employed in various positions in Boulder, including Westview Press and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, and subsequently became the founding Coordinator of the Colorado Advanced Software Institute, where she served during the next ten years at several universities including the University of Colorado, Colorado State University and Denver University. During that time,

Marge also became a 20-year member of the Boulder Potters Guild, was an active participant in the hiking and book groups of the University Women's club, served on the Board of Directors for the Colorado Music Festival and took meticulous care of her African violets. In addition to going to Hawaii, Marge loved international travel. Her first such trip was to the Netherlands in 1963, followed by trips to England in 1969, a wonderful three months in West Wickham (near London) in 1980, and numerous later visits to other countries in Europe and South America, as well as to Japan and Australia.

However, her greatest joy in life was her two granddaughters, Brooke and Courtney. In addition to her many other talents, Marge was an accomplished seamstress. Consequently, she enjoyed spending many hours sewing special outfits for the girls that are still treasured

by their mother. In later years, she also became an accomplished bridge player, which she more recently played just for fun with her good friends Marta, Bobbie and Carol.

In addition to her immediate family, Marge is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews, all of whom fondly called her Aunt Marge. Finally, it should be noted that Marge was very proud of Cathy's highly successful 30-year career as an elementary school teacher, and that she greatly appreciated Dr. Craig's empathetic care and treatment. Moreover, she truly loved Boulder. During the 55 years that she lived in Boulder, she often said that she and her family were very fortunate to have been able to live in such a beautiful place.

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