



## Joan Shirley Sterr

August 7, 1945 - February 14, 2016

JO'AN SHIRLEY STERR August 7, 1945 ~ February 14, 2016 Jo'an Shirley Sterr was a powerful, loving woman, who lived her life with purpose. Jo'an was born in Tama, Iowa on August 7, 1945 to Donald Noble and Carrie (Gregg) Noble. The 4th of 5 children, she always thought herself a farmer's daughter, and her early experiences on her family's farm colored her work ethic throughout her life. Graduating with a BS in Math from Wartburg College, Jo'an served as a high school teacher for most of her life. She met her husband, William Sterr, in 1977 while they were both teaching at Harlem High School in Loves Park, IL. After moving to Vancouver, WA in 1994, Jo'an taught at Legacy High School, eventually leading the Independent Study program. She was a member of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church, where she was very active throughout her years. Among other activities, Jo'an had been active in the Sunday School Program, and was a founding member of the Church's Peace and Justice Committee. In addition, she was very active with Vancouver Peace and Justice, was a member of the local Middle Class Alliance, and the state-wide Faith Action Network. She adored the performing arts, and did what she could to instill that love in others. Jo'an maintained a lifelong commitment to peace, justice, and equality in the world. Her interest in that work spanned from international - with her support of children and orphanages ravaged by war in the Middle East - to her local support of the homeless and needy in her community. Jo'an found her meaning in life through making better whatever corner of the world in which she found

herself, shining light and love where it was most needed. This drove her attitude and her actions until the day she left this Earth. Jo'an passed peacefully at her home in Vancouver on Sunday, February 14, 2016, following a 15-year struggle with cancer. Surrounded by family, her passing came after a raucous going away party attended by scores of her loved ones. Jo'an is survived by her loving husband, William; her sister, Margaret Jorris; and her children, Carrie, Ambrose, Peter, Ben, Anna, and Le. She was preceded in death by her parents; her brother, Charles Noble; and her sisters, Betty Backen and Helen Peschau. A Celebration of Life will be held at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church on Saturday, February 27 at 1 p.m. The church is located at 12513 SE Mill Plain Blvd., Vancouver, WA 98684. All who knew her are welcome to attend. Light refreshments will follow the celebration. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the family that will be distributed throughout the community to help alleviate local homelessness. Please sign her guest book at: [www.columbian.com/obits](http://www.columbian.com/obits).

# Tribute Wall



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

---

**Evergreen Memorial Gardens** - July 03, 2025 at 09:57 PM

JS

“ I was thinking of Jo'An, and the whole Sterr family, from Berlin today as you had the celebration of life. We are all so lucky to have known her.

---

**Jake Simonds** - February 27, 2016 at 12:00 AM

AG

“ JoAn built hope through work. The remedy for something wrong in the world was to look for a way, even a small way to make it better. There is a gaping hole left on Earth that she would want us to fill, I have learned so much from her. it's time to follow our heart, ignore the naysayers and make this world a better place.

---

**Ann Giles** - February 26, 2016 at 12:00 AM