



Polly Whitaker Abel

April 24, 2022

Polly Abel died on Sunday, April 24, 2022, at Calvary Homes. She was born on April 17, 1921, to Marion and Lloyd Whitaker, and lived most of her life in Lancaster.

Polly was a piano teacher, a voracious reader of thrillers, a fierce Scrabble player, and a generous friend to all. She loved her garden, especially the birds.

Polly was a life-long musician with an early focus on voice. In high school, she won the state competition as Solo Soprano. She was unable to attend the national competition, however, because she spoke as Valedictorian at Manheim Township High School graduation ceremonies on the same day. She attended The Juilliard School for voice and finished her musical education at the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music, majoring in piano.

After college, Polly was active in Lancaster's community theater and had leading roles in many comedies. It was there that she met the love of her life John Edward (Jed) Abel, Jr. They married in 1942 before he shipped out to the European Theater in WWII. They had three sons, Michael, Patrick, and Erik, who survive her.

Polly was a radio pioneer. She worked at WGAL Radio in the early 1940s and

was Lancaster's first woman radio announcer. Working at WDAS in Philadelphia during WWII, Polly was the first woman station announcer and musical director on the East Coast. She also acted there in several radio plays.

For 35 years Polly served on the board of the Lancaster County Association for the Blind (now VisionQuest). She volunteered at their Radio Talking Library, reading newspapers, magazines, and books on the association's radio station. She saw the need for large-print calendars and spearheaded the project, recruiting local businesses to provide the funding, and local artists to provide the images.

Polly had hundreds of piano students over the last 70 years of her life, sometimes teaching the parents as well as their children. Many of her students became life-long friends. Polly continued teaching up until her 101st birthday.

Polly was loved by all. Her many friends will miss her bright smile, her quick wit, and her apple pies.

In addition to her sons, Polly is mourned by her daughters-in-law Julie and Martha Abel; her granddaughters and their husbands Leanne and Michael Stanczak and Elspeth and Christopher Slater; and three great-grandsons Jonathan and Christopher Stanczak, and Augie Slater. Her husband, Jed, died in 1992.

Family and friends are invited to share conversations and memories of Polly during an informal gathering that will take place on Saturday, May 21, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at The Groffs Family Funeral Home, 528 W. Orange Street, Lancaster, PA. Interment will be private. Instead of flowers, Polly's family asks that memorial contributions be made to Calvary Homes, 502 Elizabeth Drive, Lancaster, PA 17601.

Previous Events

Family Receiving Friends

MAY 21. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc
528 W Orange St.
Lancaster, PA 17603
(717) 394-5300
admin@thegroffs.com
<https://thegroffs.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Polly Whitaker Abel* ”

October 22, 2023 at 11:34 PM

HE

“ I’d like to make a toast to Polly - to a life well-lived!

To a shining example of service to others, of kindness, and thoughtful generosity. To a friend who was quick with an accolade and a “great job” sticker. To Polly for her patience and good humor.

When I took lessons from Polly, she’d respond to my mistakes at the piano with a comment like, “Ooooooh, that was interesting and lovely. What is this note right here? Would you try it with that note?”

Because she’d never charge more for a lesson than when she’d started teaching, I’d trade yard work for lessons. While trimming her shrubs, when I was trying to force the plants back into their own spaces, she taught me, “no, no. Just a little trim. I like how the different plants interact and play together. Do you see how these holly and azalea branches fill in the emptiness of the rhododendron? Let them play together. They like each other.”

Thank you Polly, for sharing your love and gentle wisdom, for your generous spirit and easy laughter.

I raise my glass, by your fireplace, and clink it with your wee glass, just like old times - when we were playing hockey and skipping my official piano lesson.

I regret that I am unable to attend your service today due to Covid in my household. I’ll see you in the woods, by the trilliums, where your chipmunks and wood thrushes play.

I love you. Harry Edwards

Harry Edwards - May 21, 2022 at 10:52 AM

PA

“ A 35-minute recording of her music can be heard on Youtube. Search for Polly Abel at the Piano.

Patrick Abel - May 09, 2022 at 06:24 AM

HK

This recording is an incredible gift. In all the years I took lessons with Mrs. Abel, I never got to hear her play at any length. As my first and only piano teacher, she changed my life forever. All my thanks to Patrick, Eric and Michael for sharing her with me and the countless other students who were lucky enough to know and learn from her. My warmest thoughts are with you.

Hans Kellner

Hans Kellner - May 19, 2022 at 01:09 PM

BA

“ *I'll never forget her! The tributes I read are all true; Polly was one in a million. Space would not permit all the memories I have from her many years of service to "the Blind Association" under its many names, but one of the first was of Polly, Kate Keller, and Betty Ipnar coming into the building on Walnut Street every Thursday morning, when I would greet them with "Here they are - Ready, Willing, and Abel." I don't think a week went by that one of them didn't have a story to tell, often about something silly one of them did or what happened to them, who knows! Their studio was a remade half of the men's room, but that didn't bother them; they were professionals who became friends to many blind and vision impaired in Lancaster County, educating them and enriching their days. God bless, Mike, Pat, and Erik and her beloved grandchildren.*

Barbara Graeter

Barbara - May 04, 2022 at 02:31 PM

BS

“ Pat, Mike and Eric - I was so sadden to read of your mom's passing - she certainly led a full and rewarding life. I love the picture of her - that is how I remember her, always with a warm and inviting smile. Although I only had contact with your mom for just a few years, I knew so much more about her through Ron. Polly was like a second mom to my Ron, he loved her and your whole family. And I just know in my heart that he was there in heaven to great her with open arms and a huge hug

Barbara Sandhaus - May 02, 2022 at 11:38 AM

KW

“ Polly's obituary and all the tributes already on this wall capture her so beautifully and so eloquently. She and my mom, Kate Keller, who was one of her piano students years ago and a Sunday afternoon Scrabble buddy later in life, developed a wonderfully satisfying friendship that I had the great good fortune to continue with Polly after my mom's passing. I'll miss her so very much -- the lunches at the Silver Spring Restaurant, browsing at A.C. Moore for little gifts for her piano students, discussing our favorite mystery writers, sharing memories, and philosophizing about everything under the sun. Hers was certainly a life well lived. The world would be a much better place if there were more Pollys in it.
Kathy Wise

Kathy Wise - May 02, 2022 at 10:17 AM

SU

“ to Pat and Mike, and Eric. I don't usually get the paper, but one is always delivered to the end of the lane and today I picked it up. As I was just reading through the news, I stopped because I saw a beautiful happy picture in the obituaries! Oh my goodness, what wonderful memories I have of her and the rest of you visiting in Brickerville! and Elk Neck?! I'm sorry I didn't keep in touch, but this picture so well captures her for me! She was quiet and very pretty and better disciplined than my mom. And do you remember the balloon guys we bounced down the steps? My thoughts are with you all.

Much love, Sue

SusanReinhart - May 01, 2022 at 05:00 PM

TC

“ Of all my Scrabble players, Polly was among the best. Every time I saw the frog meme, I knew I was facing a challenging opponent. Polly lived a full and rich life. She was savvy, intuitive, and charming. To know Polly was to love her. She made everyone she met feel special. I wish I could have known her longer. May the delicious memory of her apple pies, her love of music, her infectious laugh, and kindness to others, fill us with song and inspire us to be a little sweeter to everyone we meet in life.

Trish Cox - May 01, 2022 at 04:04 PM

LC

“ The Cruz Family will always remember Polly and her thoughtfulness during the Christmas Season. The first gift of Christmas (Advent Calendar) will always be a memory of Polly. Thinking of you Erik.

Lisa Cruz - May 01, 2022 at 04:02 PM

CM

“ Polly was such a beautiful and classy lady. So kind and caring. It was a pleasure caring for her at Calvary Homes.
Cindi Musselman LPN 11- 7 shift.



Cindi Jo Musselman - May 01, 2022 at 02:50 AM

PA

“ The Apple Pie Thing... I remember when our house on Spring Valley was being built and a team of well diggers was on site for several days. Mom thought it would be a good idea to make them an apple pie, which they loved. Well after we were moved in and settled, the same well diggers were drilling at another property down the road. Once again, she took them an apple pie. Our neighbor, Gil Benson, would drop by from time to time and unabashedly asked her if she would make him a pie. People who visited us regularly knew that she always had an apple pie to serve.
Patrick

Patrick Abel - April 30, 2022 at 09:39 PM

LP

“ Patrick, Michael, Erik and family,
Your mother touched so many lives. Our family was blessed to have known Polly. Many took piano lessons. It was the friendship she shared with our Mom that allowed us to experience her quick wit, generosity, love of life and competitive spirit. We are inspired to exercise our minds and share our talents because we knew this beautiful soul.
Sincerely,
The Family of Maryann Mowery

Lisa Polonchak - April 29, 2022 at 09:10 AM

LP

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Lisa Polonchak - April 29, 2022 at 09:05 AM



“ Polly lived across the street from us and my daughter took lessons from her. I always loved going to her home for lessons, it was so peaceful. She was so patient with my daughter, and the sweetest person ever. I'm so glad I got to know her.

Laurie Astree - April 28, 2022 at 08:36 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Laurie Astree - April 28, 2022 at 08:34 PM