



Norma Fern Wolcott van der Meulen

September 16, 1925 - August 15, 2022

Norma Fern Wolcott was born in LaGrange, a small farming town in northern Ohio. She graduated from the College of Wooster and earned her master's degree from Northwestern University in Spanish language and literature. Her first position was teaching graduate level Spanish at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. While there, she met, fell for, and married John van der Meulen, a Chicago architect. John, who drew inspiration from the Bauhaus school of design, taught architecture at Chicago Institute of Design (then at Navy Pier, now part of the Illinois Institute of Technology).

Soon after moving to Chicago, Norma and John had their first child, Anne, and were off to Europe, where John had been commissioned by the State Department in 1950 to design U.S. Embassies. Over the course of the next three years, Norma and John lived in Copenhagen, The Hague, and Stockholm, where their second child Susan was born. When John's work ultimately finished in Paris, they returned to Chicago, where their third child Peter was born. While Norma was busy raising their family, John practiced architecture. In time, Norma returned to work as a pre-law advisor for social science students at the University of Chicago.

Norma was an accomplished musician, having studied violin, piano, and organ as a child. Norma accompanied John (a jazz pianist and classical violinist) and hosted chamber music sessions in their living room as their

children also learned to play music. Thursday evenings brought other amateur musicians to their apartment for trios, quartets, and a little tippie; it was their favorite pastime.

As children left the nest for college, Norma and John spent four years living in the Virgin Islands while John worked on designs for college buildings in St. Croix. In 1976, they returned to Chicago permanently, where they both became beloved members of the Hyde Park and University community, and where Norma doted on John as his health declined.

Norma lost her beloved partner John in 1994, and thereafter lived a peaceful life in Hyde Park. She was a devotee of University of Chicago Service League, the Art Institute and the Chicago Symphony. Since 1978, Norma actively supported the Oriental Institute as a volunteer at their Suq gift shop, where she spread good cheer and produced unique, one-of-a-kind jewelry for sale. Norma also volunteered at Montgomery Place, where she played the organ for Sunday services.

Norma had long been a leader amongst friends, acting as chauffeur, offering assistance, and being a gracious and attentive listener as she outlived many of her peers. She could often be seen walking and riding her bicycle around Hyde Park, and attended concerts and socialized with friends until she reached her 90s.

One friend summarized her well: "We all want to grow up to be like Norma."

Norma is survived by three children, jeweller Anne van der Meulen (Davey) Cunningham, and architects Susan van der Meulen and Peter (Sharron) van der Meulen; grandchildren Jasper (Jandra Nam) Phillips and Ella van der Meulen; and great-grandchildren, Kiri, Kai, and Kalani.

Memorial service will take place at 1:00P.M. on Friday, September 16 at Hyde Park Union Church, 5600 South Woodlawn Ave, Chicago, Illinois 60637. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the University of Chicago Service League, a 501c3 charitable organization, care of Virginia Meeker, 1700 E. 56 Street, #2309, Chicago IL 60637. Future interment of cremated remains at Graceland Cemetery.

Contributions may be made in her name to University of Chicago Service League, in care of Virginia Meeker 1700 East 56th., #2309, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or www.inclusivefuneralcare.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

SEP **16.** 1:00 PM (CT)

Hyde Park Union Church
5600 South Woodlawn Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

Tribute Wall



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Norma Fern Wolcott van der Meulen.* ”



September 13, 2022 at 03:56 PM



“ *2 files added to the album Memories Album* ”



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - August 26, 2022 at 11:57 AM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album* ”



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - August 23, 2022 at 01:50 PM