



## Barbara F. McMillen

July 18, 1946 - June 2, 2018

### BARBARA FIALKOWSKI MCMILLEN (1946-2018)

Barbara Ann Fialkowski McMillen passed away on June 2, 2018, at the age of 71 following a long and brave battle against heart failure.

Barbara was born on July 18, 1946, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was the first of eleven children born to Marion Fialkowski and Leona Lankford Fialkowski.

Barbara attended Frankford High School in Northeast Philadelphia and was an A student, an excellent swimmer, and performed in theater productions including playing the role of Miranda in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Following high school, she spent half a year working at the Sears store near her home on James Street and then volunteered for VISTA, the federal Volunteers in Service to America program. She was assigned to rural West Virginia where she lived with a large family and taught in a one-room schoolhouse.

Returning to Philadelphia, she lived at home while attending Temple University where she majored in English in the College of Education. Four years later she completed her undergraduate degree and decided to apply to graduate schools. Ohio University in Athens offered her a teaching assistantship in English beginning in the fall of 1969. There she met another first year graduate student William (Bill) McMillen. They fell in love and were married on January 17, 1970, a scant four months after they met. At the time of her death, they had been married for more than 48 years.

At Ohio University, Barbara majored in English with a specialty in early 19th century American Literature. She minored in Film Studies. She also began publishing poetry including a book of poems entitled *Framing* (Croissant & Company, 1977). Her dissertation topic was the use of cinematic imagery in the poetry of the 1950's American poet Parker Tyler. She received her Master's degree in 1972 and her doctorate in 1976.

One of the highlights of the years in graduate school was a two-month trip to Europe during the summer of 1971. Barbara and Bill backpacked through eleven countries traveling as far east as Vienna and as far west as Dublin.

In September of 1976, Barbara and Bill moved to Bowling Green, Ohio, with their one-

month old son Christopher. Barbara had been hired as an assistant professor in the Creative Writing Program at Bowling Green State University. She continued to publish poetry and teach graduate students in the Master of Fine Arts degree program. Barbara moved up the academic ranks becoming an Associate Professor with tenure and then Director of the Creative Writing Program for ten years. One of her early teaching innovations was introducing computers to creative writing students at BGSU. Her husband joked that she couldn't (or refused to) replace a light bulb, but could tear down and put back together any computer.

Barbara and Bill adopted a second son, Mark, who was nearly four when he came to live with his new family. Mark had special education needs that Barbara recognized because she had two younger brothers who were severely mentally and physically disabled. In the sixties, Barbara's parents had challenged the Philadelphia school system and the state of Pennsylvania that they could not discriminate against the two boys and deny them a public education. The Fialkowski lawsuit became the legal cornerstone of the groundbreaking federal law PL 94-142 establishing free and equal public education for all children.

Barbara and Bill had moved to Perrysburg in the summer of 1984. Barbara continued to teach at BGSU, while Bill continued to work as Assistant to the President at the Medical College of Ohio. Christopher attended Perrysburg schools before enrolling in and graduating from St. John's Jesuit High School. Mark attended Perrysburg schools and graduated from Perrysburg High School.

Barbara retired from teaching in 1994 when she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, which she battled for the rest of her life. Fortunately, there were times when she could travel, which included trips to Italy and France with her youngest sister Kate and a trip to Perth, Australia, for a wedding of the son of close friends. Barbara and Bill also managed most summers to spend a week up north in Glen Arbor, Michigan, located less than five miles from Sleeping Bear Dunes.

Barbara had a love of dogs. In her parents' house was a Collie named Louie. In Perrysburg she first had Pico, a Coton de Tulear and then Bret, an English Setter. Barbara always had a keen interest in politics and as a teenager in Philadelphia shook hands with President John F. Kennedy. She was a supporter of President Barack Obama. In 2016, she supported presidential candidate Bernie Sanders and was elected to be a delegate for Bernie at the Philadelphia Democratic National Convention. It was one of the great experiences of her life.

Barbara was preceded in death by her parents and her brothers John and Walter. She is survived by her husband William, son Christopher (Aleksandra) and son Mark as well as grandchildren Marissa, Sierra, and Vuk. She is also survived by sisters Mary (Charles), Eileen (Elwood), Joan of Newburgh, Florida, and Kathryn of Philadelphia, and brothers Anthony (Cheryl), of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, Michael of Riverview, New York, James of

Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, and David of Philadelphia.

The family wishes to thank the physicians—especially Dr. Thomas Schwann—nurses, and medical specialists at the University of Toledo Medical Center for their heroic efforts and kindness.

The family is planning a private celebration of Barbara's life in mid-summer.

In loving memory of Barbara, please consider making a donation to her personal charity of choice, the Fialkowski Scholarship at Temple University, which grants yearly scholarships to students majoring in Disability Studies. Checks should be made out to Temple University Institute on Disabilities (denote: Fialkowski Scholarship). The mailing address is Institute on Disabilities, Temple University, Fialkowski Scholarship, 411 Student Center South, 1755 N. 13th St., Philadelphia, PA 19122.

# Comments

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“ Steph Ball lit a candle in memory of Barbara F. McMillen



**Steph Ball** - June 19, 2018 at 11:48 AM

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“ David and Harper join me in sending our love. My good memories of Barbara, Bill, Chris, and Mark from the early days in Bowling Green join with the thoughts, emotion, and laughter Barbara and I shared publicly on Facebook and privately through Messenger these past few years. They swirl chaotically; it's too soon to pluck out an individual moment. So when I think of you who have known and felt Barbara's light, love, warmth, passion for justice, and laughter for nearly fifty years, I see an enormous reservoir of love and good memories that will be forever full, no matter how often you visit that reservoir and pluck out a moment to treasure and hold close. Love, Jan

**Janice Alberghene** - June 18, 2018 at 04:52 PM

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“ Bill- please accept our heartfelt condolences. We wish you strength and peace during this very difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are directed your way. Sincerely,  
Terry and Marybeth Smith

**Terry Smith** - June 18, 2018 at 12:36 PM

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“ Bill and Family,  
  
So sorry for your loss. Barb was kind and strong. Our thoughts are with you. Hugs.  
  
Esther, Mike and Lydia Fabian

**esther** - June 11, 2018 at 03:09 PM

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“ Bill, Chris, Mark & family,  
We share in your sadness over Barbara's passing. She was a sweet, warm,  
passionate and gracious lady.

I recall the pleasant conversations we shared when I was remodeling your home. Just a few years ago, I was working on a home in your neighborhood when a cheerful greeting of hello called out from the sidewalk. Who else, but the friendly face of Barb. I enjoyed chatting with her once again and catching up on how our families have grown.

She was a wonderful lady. We will remember her fondly.  
Fred & Ann Eberly

**Fred Eberly** - June 11, 2018 at 09:24 AM

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“ Dear Bill and Family,  
We were so saddened to hear of Barb's untimely passing. Barb was such a nice and caring person. She always had a smiling face, despite her not feeling well. Know that we are holding you in our hearts as you go through this very difficult time.  
Sincerely,  
Barry and Mary Jo Swartzberg  
Tucson, AZ

**Barry & Mary Jo Swartzberg** - June 10, 2018 at 11:23 PM

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“ Barb, her husband Bill, and I all started graduate school seeking MA's in English in August 1969 at Ohio University. 1969 at Ohio University -- that Spring after the shootings at Kent State tear gas filled the streets of Athens OH, the campus was closed, but graduate classes still met in apartments and homes. Bill and Barb and I remained close friends over the next 49 years even after we all finished our Ph.D.'s at Ohio University. When she was a faculty member at Bowling Green State University, Barb served as the outside reader on my sister Kathy Merlock Jackson's Ph.D. dissertation. Barb was brilliant and funny and generous, a poet and a scholar, a gifted teacher, a devoted mother and wife. She was my friend.

**Raymond James Merlock** - June 10, 2018 at 11:09 PM

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“ Bill, Very sorry for your loss. Take care of yourself and your family  
Al Geha

**Albert Geha** - June 10, 2018 at 07:48 AM

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“ Bill, I am so sorry to hear of Barb's passing. Sending you and your family prayers. Sincerely, Pat Austin (fka Munier).

**Patricia Austin** - June 10, 2018 at 06:14 AM

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“ We are so sad to learn of Barb's passing even though we hadn't spent time together for 24 yr. since moving from Bowling Green. Our boys enjoyed playing together when they were toddlers while we were neighbors. Barb's beautiful smile will always be remembered. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Bill, Chris, and Mark.

Love, Bob & Kathy Arrowsmith--Lexington, SC



**Kathy Arrowsmith** - June 09, 2018 at 06:47 PM