

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF



ARDETH BILLINGS OWEN FORTIER

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07.25.1929 - 10.25.2021

First Unitarian Universalist Society  
of San Francisco

Sunday, April 3, 2022 at 2 pm  
1187 Franklin @ Geary



Prelude	<i>Aria, When Thou Art Near</i>	Johann Sebastian Bach Reiko Oda Lane, Organist
Centering/Welcoming	<i>Canon of a Second – For Ardie 1962</i>	Music by Erich Katz arr. Thomas V. Axworthy performed by the Los Angeles Recorder Orchestra (LARO)
Greetings and Chalice Lighting		Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern
Reading	“When Death Comes” by Mary Oliver	Thom Steere, son
The Life of Ardeth Fortier		Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern
Music	<i>Toccata</i> from Organ Symphony Number V	Charles-Marie Widor Reiko Oda Lane, Organist
Slideshow	<i>Sure on This Shining Night</i>	Morten Lauridsen
Music	<i>I'll Be Seeing You</i>	Music by Sammy Fain; Lyrics by Irving Kahal Nancy Munn, soloist, Wm. Garcia Ganz, accompanist
Memories		Robin Steere, daughter Leslie Steere, daughter
Anthem	<i>Bear Me Gently</i>	Kinley Lange Choir led by Mark Sumner
Memories		Melinda Steere, daughter John Sheehy, family friend
Hymn 163	<i>For the Earth Forever Turning</i>	BLUE-GREEN HILLS OF EARTH

Closing Words/Blessing

Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern

Benediction Response     *Foreman Benediction*

Daniel Pinkham  
Choir

Postlude     *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565*

Johann Sebastian Bach  
Reiko Oda Lane, Organist

Please stay seated until the end of the Bach Postlude.

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Donations in lieu of flowers can be made to:  
The Fortier Music Fund  
First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco  
1187 Franklin Street  
San Francisco, Ca. 94109

Please join us for a reception after the service.

**Special gratitude to the many people who made Ardeth's last few years so comfortable:**

Eden Jima, caregiver for over 9 years

Eden's daughters, Senegal and Maeket, and husband Eyasu

Melinda Steere, caretaker for over 9 years

Carrie and Eugene Salazar, with whom Ardeth shared a home

Eliza Welsh, chaplin and violin player, Hospice by the Bay

## **Participants & Credits**

Rev. Vanessa Rush Southern, Senior Minister

Mark Sumner, Music Director

Reiko Oda Lane, Organist

Jonathan Silk, Director of Communications

Shulee Ong, Camera

Joe Chapot, Ministers' Assistant

Suzie Bernahola, Reservations Manager

Dan Barnard, Facilities Manager

UUSF Choir Members

Flowers, Amy Kelly

Roberto Dela'o, Leland Jones, Remigio Flood, Kelvin Jones, Sextons

And finally, a very special thank you to Annie Stuart, Leslie Steere, Robin Steere and Melinda Steere for preparing the slideshow.

# Music Notes

One of mom's favorite places was here in this sanctuary, with its beautiful rose windows and soaring ceiling. And of all the corners of this room, her special place was up in the choir loft, sitting in the alto section, near enough to the railing to be able to watch Reiko's feet work the organ pedals.

Mom was part of the choir for over 20 years. It was a touchstone for her. In her later years, with most of her memory dimmed and her conversations halting, she could still read and sing music.

Occasionally, mom would hear or perform something that she asked me to "put on her list" of music she wanted performed at her memorial, "if we decided to do anything." I wrote these choices down on the cover of a booklet every choir member has: the "Amen Packet." When mom died, it was easy to know exactly what music to include.

Today, you will hear special compositions that were on her list.

*Canon of a Second*—For Ardie 1962 (recording) Los Angeles Recorder Orchestra  
Erich Katz, composer; Arranged & Conducted by Thomas V. Axworthy

*Erich Katz was a seminal figure in bringing recorder music and recorder playing to the US. Erich was born in what was then Prussia, in 1900. In 1928, he co-founded the Freiburger Kurse für Musiktheori, where he taught choral performing, composition and theory. He survived internment in Dachau during WWII and emigrated to the United States in 1943. He was a neighbor of ours in Santa Barbara and mom and dad took recorder lessons from him. Erich wrote a song in Ardeh's honor, **The Canon of a Second—For Ardie**. It was arranged for the Los Angeles Recorder Orchestra (LARO) by son-in-law Thomas Vail Axworthy, LARO's director.*

*Toccata* from Organ Symphony Number 5 Reiko Oda Lane, organist  
Charles-Marie Widor, composer

*Mom loved to watch Reiko play the organ, always seating herself so she could lean over and watch Reiko's hands and feet. This Widor composition uses foot pedal to maximum effect. Mom loved the occasions when she got to sit in the choir loft, either here or in Transylvania, and immerse herself in the waves of sound coming out of the mighty organ during this wonderful toccata.*

*I'll Be Seeing You* Nancy Munn, soloist  
Music by Sammy Fain Accompanist, Wm. Garcia Ganz  
Lyrics by Irving Kahal

*Mom and I took singing lessons from Bill Ganz, our accompanist today. **I'll Be Seeing You** was one of the songs we sang together and a particular favorite of mom's. This song always brought up memories of WWII for her.*

*Sure on This Shining Night*  
Morten Lauridsen, composer

Minnesota Choral Artists

*This song is performed often by the UUSF choir, but here, the song is performed by the Minnesota Choral Artists, and is being used to accompany the slideshow tribute to mom's life. Mom loved the song, particularly Lauridsen's love of using the "re" note for altos.*

*Bear Me Gently*  
Kinley Lange, composer

Choir

*A song specifically requested by mom. She sang it several years ago and asked me to "add it to her list."*

*Forman Benediction*  
Daniel Pinkham, composer

Choir

*The lyrics encompass mom's spirit. She specifically asked that this song be performed at any memorial we might hold.*

*Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, BWV 565*  
Johann Sebastian Bach, composer

Reiko Oda Lane, organist

*Mom loved the organ, especially when all the stops were pulled out! And she loved this piece, commenting that, when Reiko plays it, "you can follow each of the lines in the composition clearly." Mom went on a choir tour to Transylvania in 2007 and Reiko also went. Mom was already getting confused about the details of her life, but she loved traveling with the singers and especially with Reiko. Her absolute joy during that tour was climbing up into the ancient choir lofts when Reiko rehearsed, breathing in the music and the ancient smells of these historic churches.*

Hymn: *For the Earth Forever Turning*

hymn # 163

*Mom loved this hymn. It was on her list. She always cried when we sang it in church. We were all so lucky to be in her orbit.*

Carrie, daughter







Ardeth Billings Fortier died the morning of October 25, 2021, in her own home, with her children nearby. She was 92.

Ardeth was born in Spokane, Washington, the youngest of three children. World War II broke out when she was a young teen and her father became an army base commander in Presque Isle, Maine. Ardeth moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts and attended Buckingham (now known as Buckingham, Brown and Nichols). Despite having to leave her parents as a teenager and the war, she always credited Buckingham for giving her the education she would not have received in Spokane or Presque Isle. Her high school diploma from Buckingham hung on the walls of her many homes until she died.

Following graduation from Buckingham, Ardeth enrolled at Pomona College, where she met her first husband, James Henry Steere, DVM. Together, they had six children over the next 13 years: Robin (Steere) Axworthy, Leslie Steere, Carrie Steere-Salazar, Melinda Steere, Thomas Steere and Robert Steere. The families' peripatetic life took them from Davis, California to GrantsPass, Oregon to Copenhagen, Denmark, to Santa Barbara, California to Watertown, Massachusetts and finally to Petaluma, California, where Ardeth started a new chapter in her life.

Divorcing in 1965, Ardeth completed her long-delayed college education at last and married for a second time. Her life with second husband Joseph Fortier, PhD, once again led her far from home. With the younger children in tow, they lived in Kilrush, Ireland and Munich, Germany before returning to the United States and settling in Mendocino County. In 1979, Joe died and Ardeth almost immediately went back to school, this time to become a registered nurse. With her husband gone and all her children grown, Ardeth joined the Peace Corps and (at 60) moved to Costa Rica, learning a new language, and using her skills in an Hogar de Ancianos, a home for frail elders.

Peace Corps adventure concluded, Ardeth returned to America, settling in San Francisco and continuing her career as a registered nurse until her retirement in 2005. She purchased a home with Carrie and Carrie's husband, Eugene Salazar, living there until her death. It was the longest she had ever stayed in one place.

Ardeth was a devoted member of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of San Francisco and a long-time member of the church choir there. One of her favorite things in life was spending Sunday morning up in the choir loft.

Ardeth is remembered as a beloved mother who gladly accepted and loved the many extra "family members" she met through her children. Her glorious smile and unique and frequent laughter drew people into her orbit. She was an inveterate reader of mystery novels, completed crossword puzzles in ink and loved every animal that ever had the good fortune to cross paths with her.

In addition to her six children, Ardeth is survived by sons-in-law Thomas Axworthy and Eugene Salazar, daughters-in-law Annie Stuart, Becky McGowan Steere and Christen Steere, grandchildren McKenna Steere, Dulcina Axworthy, Maya Stuart-Steere, Jaida Lindsay-Dudley and Shaelyn Steere.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Fortier Music Fund, which Ardeth seeded many years ago when she made donations to support the music programs at the First Unitarian Universalist Society. This special fund was later named after her in honor of her constant and fierce support of music. It will remain a legacy of her life.

She will be greatly missed.

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