

In Memoriam: Eleanor Rae Fell

July 29, 1944-June 16, 2013

ELEANOR Rae Fell was born in Chicago, Illinois on July 29th, 1944, and grew up in Bloomington, Indiana. She was the daughter of the late Irving and Rose Fell. She attended nursery school through twelfth grade at University High School (3rd and Jordan) and graduated from UHS in 1962. After attending Stephens College for one year, she transferred to IU where she earned her Bachelor of Music Degree in Harp from the Jacobs School of Music in 1965. She became a world-renowned harpist and arranger and the co-owner and Artistic Director of Vanderbilt Music Company. She was one of the leading names in the harp world and was recognized as a pioneer of popular harp performance and arranging.

Born into a musical family, she began her harp training at age five because her grandfather loved the story of King David in the Bible. After graduating from Indiana University, she performed throughout the U.S. including with the Santa Fe Opera, North Carolina, and El Paso Symphony Orchestras. Her first job as a pop harpist came in 1972 when she went to Abidjan, Africa, where she performed nightly in their five-star Hotel Ivoire restaurant. This was the start of an amazing new career for Eleanor. She continued to refine her arranging skills while traveling and performing in Switzerland, Germany, and Japan. In 1974 she moved to New York City and for eleven years she performed in major hotels and restaurants, including The Rainbow Room, St. Regis Hotel, Waldorf Astoria, and the Americana Hotel. In 1976, Eleanor, along with Mother Teresa, was featured on the *Today Show* hosted by Barbara Walters.

In 1977 she formed the Vanderbilt Music Company with her partner, Lee Caulfield. Eleanor officially retired from hotel performance in 1984 to spend time with her son and her newly formed company.

In 1985, she moved back to Bloomington, IN, where she concentrated on running Vanderbilt



Music, which specializes in everything for the harp and serves harpists throughout the world. Eleanor and Lee sold their interests in the company in 2012. Eleanor served on the faculty of and performed at the major international harp conferences, festivals and seminars. More than thirty-five of her harp arrangements are in publication through her company and other publishers. She also produced a CD, which reflects her wide range of musical styles.

In 1986, Eleanor established a harp scholarship in her name at the Jacobs School of Music to assist harp majors. In their 1999 “End-of-the-Decade” issue, the harp publication *The Harp Column* magazine recognized Eleanor as one of the most influential harpists of the 20th century. In 2006, she was selected as a distinguished alumna of University High School (now Bloomington North) and was one of the first to be placed on their Hall of Fame.

Eleanor wanted to be remembered by her contribution to the harp world—specifically the publications she produced through Vanderbilt Music Company, her own and those of the many talented

harpists she worked with such as Sarah Bullen, Elizabeth Hainen, Ela Szmyt, Carol Robbins, and scores of others. This was her passion, pleasure, and love: to help others and see their works in publication for generations of harpists to enjoy.

Eleanor is survived by her loving husband, Lamar E. Peterson, her son Scott Caulfield (Marci), grandson James Irving, one sister Roberta Fell Kletter (Harry) one brother, Arthur Marshall Fell (Teresa), several nieces, one nephew, one cousin and an aunt. Donations may be made in her memory to the Eleanor Fell Harp Scholarship c/o IU Alumni Foundation, P.O. Box 500, Bloomington, IN 47402 or the Bloomington Hospice House, 2810 S. Deborah Dr., Bloomington, IN 47403.

Eleanor's motto:

**"You have to have endless hope,
not a hopeless end." ❧**

