

Always dedicated to enriching the intellectual and cultural lives of her students, Norma Peterson taught elementary school and piano lessons in Alexandria, Virginia and San Diego. Norma has been involved with Musical Merit for the past 45 years, including serving as our President between 2004 and 2010. Upon graduating from San Diego State, Norma married Army Lieutenant John Peterson and moved to Japan where her sons John and Jeffrey were born. Norma enjoyed playing bells with the English Handbell Choir of Point Loma Presbyterian Church and she was Director of the First United Methodist Church Handbell Choir for many years. Norma encouraged John and Jeffrey to be active in music with private trumpet and trombone lessons and as members of the Northern Virginia Youth Symphony, San Diego Youth Symphony and the Virginia All State Band. Norma helped coordinate their high school trip to Europe where their Symphonic Orchestra competed in Vienna Austria. Fifty years later, the high school is still celebrating the International Music Festival victory as one of the school's major accomplishments!

Jeffrey was a Musical Merit scholarship winner in 1979 and 1980 and as a professional trombonist, he performed with the U.S. Army Blues, Canadian Brass and major symphonies around the world, including Mexico City, Honolulu and Madrid. Jeffrey was the Principal Trombonist with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra for 20 years. After graduating from the Naval Academy, John completed a career as a surface warfare naval officer and worked as an engineering manager with SAIC and Lockheed Martin. John has been a member of Musical Merit since 2014 and has served on the Executive Board as our Treasurer.

Of course, we fondly remember Norma's mother, Florence Stephenson, the "grand dame of the keyboard". Florence was one of the founding members of Musical Merit in 1946 and served as President from 1961 to 1963. After graduating from Toronto Conservatory of Music, the Mathay School of Music in England and the St Louis Conservatory of Music, Florence taught piano in San Diego for nearly 70 years. She also performed during summers in Banff Springs at Lake Loise, during the last peace-time voyage of the Queen Mary and with the San Diego Symphony. She loved Heli-hiking in Calgary and travelling with her students to destinations including Jakarta, Vancouver, London, Rio de Janeiro and Machu Pichu. Florence's secret to living a long, wonderful life that spanned nearly a century is to fill your home with music consisting of one or two pianos, trios, quartets or chamber groups performed by musical merit scholarship winners.

Florence heli-hiking at 90 years young:





(From left to right) Jeffrey, Norma and John