

THE ROANOKE TIMES

DIEFENDERFER, Caren L.

April 6, 2017

Wife, mother, friend, community builder, colleague, teacher, mentor, and mathematician, Caren L. Diefenderfer, passed on Thursday, March 30, 2017.

Caren was predeceased by her mother, Nancy Ross Diefenderfer and is survived her cherished husband, David Robertson; her beloved sons, Mark Robertson and Joseph Robertson; her father, Carson Diefenderfer; her sister, Elaine Diefenderfer; her nieces, Pamela Pontius, Elizabeth Pontius and Nancy Pontius.

Caren grew up in Allentown, Pa. and attended Smith College before transferring to join the first group of women ever admitted to Dartmouth College. She graduated with a degree in mathematics from Dartmouth, where she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. She continued her outstanding academic career at the University of California at Santa Barbara, where she earned her Ph.D. in mathematics.

After completing her studies, Caren was offered a faculty position at Hollins College, where for 40 years she challenged and nurtured students through their mathematics courses and mentored young women as they navigated their changing worlds. She worked with colleagues across the campus to develop innovative programs and help build community. For her many achievements on campus she was awarded the Hollins University Distinguished Service Award, the Herta Freitag Faculty Award, and the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Service Award.

Caren became a nationally-renowned figure in the field of mathematics through her pioneering work in Quantitative Reasoning, a field of education that helps students develop competency when working with numerical data across academic disciplines. She led numerous seminars for faculty around the country on methods of teaching Quantitative Reasoning and published several articles on the subject. She held leadership positions in the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) and in January of this year was presented with the MAA's prestigious Deborah and Franklin Tepper Haimo Award, which honors college or university teachers whose teaching effectiveness has had influence beyond their own institutions.

Caren loved her family and was a generous and caring friend. She was devoted to her students, to her profession, and to Hollins. She was respected by her students as well as her colleagues at Hollins and across the country and leaves an enduring legacy.

Caren's memorial service is scheduled for 4 p.m., Monday, April 10, 2017 at the Jessie Ball DuPont Chapel at Hollins University with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that gifts be made toward the Caren L. Diefenderfer Scholarship at Hollins University.

http://www.roanoke.com/obituaries/diefenderfer-caren-l/article_50d0cf4a-6d2d-5b9e-ace1-b4b04cfb0ea4.html