

Priscilla Williams Magee
September 18, 1923 – December 16, 2020
Member of Oakland Community Orchestra, 1980-2017

Priscilla Magee passed away peacefully on December 16, 2020, in Alameda, California, at age 97. She had broken her hip in a fall the prior week. That date happens to be Beethoven's birthday, and her husband, John Magee, had died on the same date 15 years earlier.

She was born and raised in Evanston, IL, and began playing the violin in the 3rd grade. She played in all her school orchestras from junior high through college (Northwestern University), where she graduated with honors in mathematics.

After a short career in math at the Argonne National Laboratory, Priscilla married her scientist boss and moved to South Bend, Indiana, where John taught and did research in the chemistry department at Notre Dame. She once wrote, "I was soon quite busy being a faculty wife and having three children in 26 months." Together they raised their "string trio" of kids: Larry, viola; Linda, violin; and Bradley, cello.

Priscilla took a hiatus of 13 years from the violin, while being a mother and doing volunteer work. When she started up again, she played in the orchestras at Notre Dame and Indiana University at South Bend. By then the kids were in their teens, so naturally a string quartet was formed to play Beethoven and Mozart. John's sabbatical leave in 1964 took the family to California for a year in Palo Alto, where she felt privileged to join the Stanford Orchestra. His next leave in 1971 took him and Priscilla to Oxford, England, where she got to play in the Oxford Orchestral Society.

In 1976, Priscilla and John moved to Berkeley, where John had been invited to work at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. She joined up with the Berkeley Red Cross, helped coordinate volunteers in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and went on to serve on the Red Cross Board and committees for 30 years. She was also a member of the Berkeley Piano Club, the East Bay League of the San Francisco Symphony, and the Lamorinda chapter of the AAUW.

During those years Priscilla also played with the Prometheus Symphony and the Diablo Symphony. In summers she attended chamber music workshops in Humboldt (CA); Ashland, Oregon; and Pingree Park, Colorado; and she was concertmaster of the National Elderhostel Orchestra in Carmel Valley for over 10 years.

And in 1980, Priscilla joined the Oakland Community Orchestra, where she served as concertmaster for many of her 37 years, as well as a board member. The OCO honored her in February 2018 with a truly special retirement party.

Priscilla leaves a legacy of decades of community service, active participation in a wide range of organizations, and a lifelong love and enthusiasm for music. She will be missed.





Priscilla Magee
Thank You For 36+ Years
We Will Miss You!!
Oakland Community Orchestra