



Mrs. Leslie Elena Starr

October 4, 1950 - February 12, 2021

Leslie Elena Starr, age 70, of Baltimore, a highly regarded musician and birder, died on February 12 of a heart attack.

She was born in Baltimore on October 4, 1950, and was raised in Annapolis, graduating from Annapolis High School in 1968 and St. John's College in 1972 with a bachelor's degree. She then travelled to Europe and the Middle East, including Iran, Afghanistan, and India. On her return, she recovered from brucellosis, contracted in India, and attended the Peabody Conservatory, graduating in 1978 with a Bachelor of Music degree.

She commenced a career as a freelance musician, performing on Renaissance and Baroque woodwinds with Pro Musica Rara in Baltimore, and on the oboe with Bach in Baltimore, the South Florida Symphony, and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra as a long-term substitute. She was principal oboist of the Delaware Symphony and co-principal of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra.

She taught at Goucher College and the Baltimore School for the Arts, where her students included Katherine Needleman, now principal oboist of the Baltimore Symphony.

In 1981, she married Joseph Turner, then principal oboist of the Baltimore Symphony. Together they enjoyed outdoor activities as well as music.

They camped in the Grand Canyon and Berkshire Mountains, climbed Mt. Washington (twice), and backpacked on the Appalachian Trail in Massachusetts and Maine and the Long Trail in Vermont. They enjoyed sea kayaking on the Chesapeake Bay and Patuxent River. She liked cross-country skiing, ice skating, and long walks in the neighborhood.

While hiking in the Berkshires, Leslie began to share her husband's interest in birds, eventually far surpassing him as a birder. She achieved a life list of more than 700 North American birds (700 by 70 was her goal) and had a streak of 1,137 daily lists submitted to eBird (a citizen science organization sponsored by Cornell University) which ended the

day before her death. Her work was instrumental in getting the American Chestnut Land Trust, a preserve in Calvert County, designated an Important Bird Area by the Audubon Society.

She was a beloved mentor to young birders, befriending and teaching them. Birders were listed under “B” on her phone—more than 200 of them.

Leslie loved walking, swimming, crossword puzzles, gardening, and socializing with friends.

Even with chronic back pain later in life, she never slowed down, taking up playing the harpsichord and learning Spanish. A week before her death, she started singing lessons.

Leslie Starr is survived by her husband, Joseph Turner; her brother, John E. Starr Jr., of Annapolis; stepsons Malcolm (Monica) Turner of Louisville, KY, and Eric (Heather Harper-Troje) Turner, of Miami, FL; and grandchildren Elanor Turner, Emily “Rosie” Turner, Raina Coffey, Liam Turner, Aisleen Turner, and Riley Turner.