

Janet Jones

Dr. Janet Gretchen Jones died peacefully after a long illness on 21 September 2021 in her residence at the Collington Life Care Community in Mitchellville, MD. She was 82.



Janet was born on 1 March 1939 in Pittsburgh, PA to Arthur and Elizabeth (Betty) Jones and grew up among the orange groves of Vero Beach, FL.

Janet was a leading researcher, administrator, and long-time professor in her chosen field of analytical chemistry. After graduating from Swarthmore College in 1961, she earned her Ph.D. in Chemistry from California Institute of Technology in 1967. She served on the faculties of Colorado State University, the University at Buffalo, and North Carolina State University where she was Head of the Department of Chemistry. She spent a year as a Guggenheim Fellow at the University of Southampton, with her family along for the adventure. In 1994, she was named Director of the Chemistry Division at the National Science Foundation. Her decisions helped to guide the research direction of chemistry in the United States until her retirement in 2001.

Janet's honors and accomplishments can be measured in quantity – publications, symposia, chairs, presidencies, etc. – or in quality - the 1987 Garvan medal, the 1990 Anachem Award, the 1999 Reilley Award, and many others. But the measures of success most important to her were the success of her students; the life-long bonds that she formed with many of them; and the results of her work to increase opportunities for women in the physical sciences.

Janet's influence extended far outside of the chemistry profession. She served on the Scientific Advisory Boards of the March of Dimes and of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. When the project which would later discover gravitational waves, and win a Nobel Prize, was struggling to justify its cost, Janet paid it a visit as a novice in the field but an expert in good science. She gave it her blessing, and the rest is history.

Personally, Janet had some of her greatest happiness in the last 20 years of her life. She met Chris Cobb in the early 2000s and they were married on

April 10, 2010, as soon as it was legal where they lived in Washington, DC. Their marriage certificate was framed, hanging on a wall in their apartment so it would never be lost. Janet and Chris were committed to philanthropy and established the Comis Foundation in 2002, focusing on giving to enhance the lives of children and youth.

Following her retirement, Janet was an active volunteer, particularly in the Collington community in Mitchellville, MD where she and Chris moved in 2004. She served as President of the Residents Association and was known to residents and staff as a fierce advocate for the needs and wants of the community. She was active in her local Episcopal parish of St George's and remained a Comis Foundation trustee until 2018.

Her beloved Chris died in 2018. She is survived by her daughter Anne (Doug) Walter, her son, Adam Osteryoung, and her two beloved grandsons, Owen and Luke Walter, as well as her brother, Tom (Lorraine) Jones, her three stepdaughters and their families, and nieces, cousins, and countless friends. The little things that were uniquely Janet - how she disposed of apple cores, her relentless organization, her pronunciation of "avenue" that evoked the orange groves of her youth – and her fierceness, intellect, curiosity, humor, love of music and literature, trees and plants will be missed by all who knew and continue to love her.