

Janet Jeffery Harris, 90, was first woman to head Goucher College board of trustees

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Abstract (Abstract): Janet Jeffery Harris, who devoted much of her life to her alma mater, Goucher College, and became the first woman to head its board of trustees, died Friday at age 90 of natural causes at her Towson home.

"I never really wanted to go to [John Franklin] Goucher in the first place," Mrs. Harris said in a 1981 interview with The Sun, explaining that she was made to enroll by her millionaire father, a Goucher trustees chairman who died a few months before the 1929 stock market crash.

The couple lived in Baltimore, and her husband became a judge on the Baltimore City Superior Court, now the Baltimore Circuit Court. Mrs. Harris raised their four children and volunteered extensively at Goucher. She moved to Towson in 1993.

Full text: Janet Jeffery Harris, who devoted much of her life to her alma mater, Goucher College, and became the first woman to head its board of trustees, died Friday at age 90 of natural causes at her Towson home. A Baltimore native, she was the daughter of Nellie French and Elmore B. Jeffery, a founder of the now-defunct Equitable Trust Co. She graduated from Girls' Latin School in 1926.

"I never really wanted to go to Goucher in the first place," Mrs. Harris said in a 1981 interview with The Sun, explaining that she was made to enroll by her millionaire father, a Goucher trustees chairman who died a few months before the 1929 stock market crash.

She graduated from Goucher in 1930 with a bachelor's degree in English, and in 1933 married Charles David Harris.

The couple lived in Baltimore, and her husband became a judge on the Baltimore City Superior Court, now the Baltimore Circuit Court. Mrs. Harris raised their four children and volunteered extensively at Goucher. She moved to Towson in 1993.

She was director of the Goucher College Alumnae Association Board from 1937 to 1940, and a member of the college's board of trustees from 1942 to 1945 and from 1955 to 1982. She was vice chairwoman of the board from 1967 to 1975, and its first chairwoman from 1977 to 1979.

In 1975, Mrs. Harris received the John Franklin Goucher medal for service to the college, and in 1982, she was elected a Goucher trustee emerita. She spoke at Goucher's 1980 commencement.

In the early 1980s she served as chairwoman of a Goucher capital campaign that exceeded its \$14 million goal.

Mrs. Harris and her husband also spent years in the "adopt-a-parent" program, through which students from out of state spent time in their home.

"She was very civic-minded," said a daughter, Jayne Murphy of Baltimore. "Her father instilled in her the need to give back to the community and do things for others."

Mrs. Harris was a bridge enthusiast and loved to knit, sew and smock clothes for her daughters and their dolls. She was well known for the elaborate dinner parties she gave several times each year.

Her husband died in 1983, and two children -- Charles Harris Jr. and Suzanne Jeffery Harris Hansroth -- died in 1962 and 1968, respectively.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at Goucher's Haebler Memorial Chapel.

Mrs. Harris is survived by another daughter, Judith H. Proctor of Baltimore; a grandson, C. David H. Harris of Baltimore, whom she adopted as a son; and six other grandchildren.

Illustration

PHOTO(S); Caption: Janet Jeffery Harris received the John Franklin Goucher medal for service to the college.;

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