



Patricia Lehman Carlson

April 4, 1937 - November 11, 2025

The world got a little brighter on the day Patricia Ann was born, a teacher, traveler, artist, activist, church leader, fashion statement, and master storyteller – Pat lived her life in full color.

Pat was born with a curiosity for the world and a passion for helping others that would define her life's work. She married her lifelong partner, Dr. A. Bruce Carlson, in Canton, Ohio on August 17, 1959. Together they headed to Palo Alto, California, where Bruce completed advanced degrees at Stanford University and Pat began shaping young minds with her signature creativity and warmth. In 1963, Bruce accepted a faculty position at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and they moved to Troy, New York – a place they would call home for over five decades.

Pat graduated from Bowling Green State University in 1959 with a degree in Education, proudly representing Chi Omega, and later earned her Master of Education from SUNY Albany in 1973. Her belief in every child's potential guided her 30-year career at George Washington Elementary School in Brunswick, where she taught art, kindergarten, and first grade until retiring in 1995. A lifelong learner, Pat embraced new ideas, including a teacher exchange in Manchester, England, where she studied the emerging "open classroom" model. She helped bring that innovation to GWS as one of the creators of the interage K–2 program, allowing young students to move

between classrooms and learn at their own pace.

Pat's classroom was legendary – complete with a tree house that encouraged reading, drawing, and self-reflection. Her enthusiasm, innovation, and genuine love for teaching inspired colleagues and delighted generations of students. Even to this day, her adult children still meet former students who proudly say, “Mrs. Carlson was my favorite teacher!” Her dedication left a lasting imprint on countless lives.

Pat's commitment to peace, justice, and community shaped every chapter of her life. In 1964, the Carlsons joined the First United Presbyterian Church of Troy, New York where Pat in 1978 was ordained as a Ruling Elder and served on the Session almost continually for 25 years. She poured her energy and gifts into committees for Youth, Worship, Member Care & Evangelism, Church & Society. She also served on the Board of Directors of the Troy Area Council of Churches (TAUM), and along with Bruce supported the annual Rensselaer County CROP Hunger Walk. With her green thumb and love of beauty, Pat unofficially became the church florist for over 30 years, brightening Sundays and celebrations alike with blooms that were unmistakably “Pat.”

Pat's love for art extended far beyond the classroom and church. A passionate supporter of the arts, Pat originated and managed The Shop at the Arts Center of the Capital District for 20 years.

Under her care, it became more than a beloved holiday marketplace each year – it was a celebration of community, creativity, and connection, making it both a major fundraiser and a welcoming home for local artists.

She and Bruce believed strongly in human rights and in the importance of discovering and understanding the world. Together they traveled to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace, to Russia, the Balkans, across Africa, Egypt, Europe, Alaska, and Australia. After Bruce's passing, Pat continued to explore the

world with unending passion, traveling with friends and family – always ready with stories, artifacts, photos, and her trademark enthusiasm in her own words “...and the suitcase is always packed!” to go where her heart and help was needed.

And of course, there was Pat’s personality and unmistakable style: whether dressed in bold black and white designs or fabulously colorful, never without her ankle-length pants no matter the weather, and adorned with matching chunky jewelry and eclectic earrings that brought smiles to those around her. She didn’t just enter a room – she brightened it.

Pat’s love of art, travel, and community lives on through her family who adored her: children Kendra Carlson (Rory Cline) of Stamford, CT., Kyle Carlson and Kristen Carlson both of Little Compton, RI; and her sister-in-law Ruth DeCurtis of Willoughby Hills, OH. She is survived by her five grandchildren: Frank Jepson (Jing), August Boyd (Jesse), Kayla Carlson Comeselle (Pablo), Lukas Carlson, and Madalyn Carlson – each of whom carries forward her spirit of curiosity, compassion, and creativity.

Pat leaves behind a legacy of kindness, courage, and color. She taught us to look for beauty, stand-up for others, savor the journey, and to coordinate your earrings with your outfit. Her life was a celebration, she lived boldly, served joyfully and shared generously.

A memorial service celebrating Pat’s life will be held on Saturday, December 20, 2025, at 12:30 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church of New Canaan, CT, with a private reception to follow. In keeping with Pat’s lifelong passion for helping others, the family gratefully welcomes donations to Sawubona (<https://tinyurl.com/InMemoryOfPatriciaCarlson>), an organization that supports youth and teens in Bridgeport, CT, through creative expression to build resilience

and improve mental health.

If you wish to make a remembrance for the family, you may sign the family guestbook at www.bosakfuneralhome.com or www.facebook.com/bosakfuneralhome.

Tribute Wall

MP

“ Greetings, Kendra, Kyle and Kristen,
We are sorry that we were unable to attend your Mom’s memorial on Saturday. A donation has been made to the Arts Center of the Capital Region in Pat’s memory. Her involvement there help build the Arts Center’s mission of offering creative opportunities to so many.

One of our many fond memories of Pat was that she did the flowers for our wedding. Our Church environment was so often brightened by har flower arrangements.

Her example of standing against injustices helps us remember to support people in need. Her fashion statement spoke of her individuality and yet she shared compassion with everyone she encountered.

Know that our prayers are with you and all of Pat’s family and friends as you move forward with loving memories.

Jim and Miriam Parmelee

Members of First United Presbyterian Church, Troy, NY



Miriam Parmelee - December 23, 2025 at 07:40 AM

JG

“ We are so sorry to learn of Pat's passing. She was truly the life of every party! Pat always greeted us with a bright smile and an abundance of questions, showcasing her curiosity and vibrant spirit. She made every event feel special and knew how to bring fun to those around her.

Joe (the fourth Carlson kid) remembers all the years spent on Cole Lane, appreciating Pat's welcoming nature and truly feeling like a part of the family. I always admired the art in her home—especially the print in her bathroom from an artist I knew. I thought that was the coolest thing!

Pat left a lasting impression on everyone she met, and her spirit will live on in the cherished memories of those who knew her.

Sending you peace and love during this difficult time.

Love, Suzanne and Joe

Joe Gunther - December 09, 2025 at 07:32 PM