



Bonnie Sasaki

December 20, 1938 - September 29, 2025

Music Educator Bonnie Townsend Sasaki passed away on September 29, 2025 after a long illness.

Bonnie Marie Townsend was born on December 20, 1938, in Cincinnati, Ohio. She grew up on her family's farm in Martinsville, Ohio, with her parents Dana and Thelma (West) Townsend and her younger sister Diana. At a young age, she became an accomplished pianist, playing recitals with Diana and accompanying services in her family's Society of Friends church.

Bonnie attended Stephens College for Women in Columbia, Missouri, and then earned her education degree at Ohio University. There she met Larry Sasaki, whom she eventually married. For some 55 years, they were virtually inseparable.

Her career began at Jefferson School in Blanchester, Ohio, before she moved to Northwest Ohio in 1964 to teach K-12 music in Liberty Center and, later, she would teach in all Napoleon City Schools elementary buildings — West School, C.D. Brillhart School, Central Elementary and even Florida Elementary. Predating computers and boom boxes, there were many years Bonnie actually pushed a piano down the hall from classroom to classroom. Over 35 years, Bonnie touched the lives of more than 2,000 students in Henry County, many of whom fondly remembered her themed holiday and Hawaiian concerts. For the rest of her life, former students delighted her by stopping in the grocery store to share their memories, even serenading her with a remembered song or two. "Hawaiian Rainbows" was a particular favorite.

Bonnie often said she was proud to know that former students were sharing the joy of music with their own families.

Beyond the classroom, music was a theme in her other life activities. She played flute in the Napoleon Community Band for decades and sang in the St. Peter Lutheran Church Choir. Early on, Bonnie promoted the Community Concert series, which brought nationally known performances to Napoleon and exposed the local community to different genres at the John L. Johnson Auditorium in the 1970s - 1980s.

Bonnie was generous of spirit. A great listener, she put people at ease. And she was genuinely interested in people's lives. If she met a student on the street, she could often inquire about their siblings, parents and grandparents by name to the amazement of all. She was happiest when she was having a good gab with a friend, often a teaching colleague.

For many in Henry County, Bonnie will be remembered for the ways she and Larry shared their knowledge of the Hawaiian Islands and the Aloha Spirit, through talks, programs and their Sasaki Paradise Tours.

A proud member of the teaching sorority and service organization known as Delta Kappa Gamma, she was honored by the group for being a member of the group's Beta Zeta Chapter for over 52 years. Bonnie was involved in numerous other organizations, including the Spade and Trowel Garden Club of Florida, Ohio, the Henry County Retired Teachers Association, the Ohio Music Education Association, and United Way. Early in her life she was also a member of Rainbow Girls and the Order of the Eastern Star in Clinton County. Bonnie is preceded in death by husband Larry and by her parents, Dana and Thelma Townsend, her brother-in-law, Richard Lilly, and her son-in-law, Tom Dearing. She is survived by daughters Laralyn Sasaki Dearing of Columbus, Laryce (Sam) McMurray of Sylvania and Larann (Glenn) Soffner of Modesto, California. Other surviving family members include sister Diana Lilly of Warren, Ohio, and nephew David Andrew Lilly of Detroit, Michigan; sister-in-law Susan (John) Uliveto of Findlay, Ohio, and nieces Jodi Ferguson of Youngstown, Ohio and Heidi (Karl) Grimsley of Midlothian, Virginia, as well as

several beloved cousins from Clinton County.

Close to Bonnie's heart were her adopted "ohana," including close teaching colleagues and the extended family of Mona and Julius Walter, Sr. of Florida, Ohio. Generations of the Walter and Michaelis families welcomed the Sasaki in Henry County and offered love and support throughout their lives. In addition, Bonnie leaves behind many cherished friends from the Martinsville and Wilmington communities.

The Sasaki family would like to thank all of those who have helped and supported Bonnie during these last years of declining health. Of special mention are Bill Lytle, Peggy Fausey, Tena and Stan Duval, Sue Burson, Jayne Myers, Butch Wallace, Marlyn and Ken Krueger, Gene and Anne Grime, and Gregg Merrill. Your love and support helped keep Bonnie going and enjoying life for as long as she did.

We would also like to acknowledge Heather Waite and the nurses of the Waite Nightingale Nursing Agency, the Intensive Care Unit of Henry County Hospital, the entire staff of Northcrest Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, and Heartland Hospice for the care you gave Bonnie and compassion you showed to Bonnie and her loved ones.

Visitation will be Sunday, October 5 from 1-6 p.m. at Rodenberger-Gray Funeral Home in Napoleon, Ohio and Monday from 10-11 a.m. at the church. The funeral will be Monday, October 6 at 11:00 AM at St. Peter Lutheran Church, Florida, Ohio with interment to follow at the Florida Cemetery in Florida, Ohio

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to one of the charities Bonnie supported: The Henry County Retired Teachers Foundation, the 'Larry Sasaki and Bonnie

Townsend Sasaki Family Scholarship' at Ohio University, St. Peter Lutheran Church, Florida, Ohio, and the Henry County Hospital Foundation.

Cemetery Details

Florida Cemetery

Florida, OH

Previous Events

Public Viewing

OCT 5. 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Rodenberger Funeral Home - Napoleon
1010 Westmoreland Avenue
Napoleon, OH 43545

Public Viewing

OCT 6. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Peter's Lutheran Church-Florida, Ohio
K980 County Road 17D
Napoleon, OH 43545

Funeral Service

OCT 6. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Peter's Lutheran Church-Florida, Ohio
K980 County Road 17D
Napoleon, OH 43545

Tribute Wall

PW

“ *Mrs. Sasaki is the reason I love music. I'll always remember her coming into our class at West Elementary singing a song.*

Pam West - October 10, 2025 at 12:21 PM

SF

“ *Bonnie was one of the best teachers at Liberty Center. We always talked when we saw each other in recent years. She will be missed..*

Sandy Foor - October 06, 2025 at 04:24 PM

AM

“ *Bonnie was such a sweet soul with a big heart. She will forever be missed.*

Ashley Mayfield - October 04, 2025 at 03:50 PM

MS

“ *Your mother was such a good friend to our mom. We were so sad to hear of her passing. Our family has made a donation to the Larry and Bonnie Sasaki scholarship fund at Ohio University. Marla and Keith Sparks Marty and Cathi Quigley Angie and Harley Palmateer and Alyssa and Mike Alden. Deepest sympathy*

Marla Sparks - October 04, 2025 at 09:36 AM

KE

“ *My favorite music teacher. RIP Mrs. Sasaki.*

Kelly - October 01, 2025 at 08:49 PM

CH

“ My friends from elementary school have such fond memories and the songs she taught us! It made me chuckle when I read the obituary about her pushing that piano down the hall. I had forgotten that but I sure didn't forget any of the words to Hawaiian Rainbows or the Huki La (sp?) songs. A couple of others: Hello Everybody, yes indeed...as well as We All Live in a Yellow Submarine. I saw her a couple of years back and told her this and she was absolutely beaming! What great memories of Her after all these years!

Cheryl A Hershberger - October 01, 2025 at 04:14 PM

DH

“ Laralyn, Laryce and Larann -- our deepest thoughts and prayers are with you and yours at this time. Your mom was such a special lady to those "Rausch" kids! She was a constant in our lives as well as a neighbor and friend to our parents. Bonnie taught me in piano as well as music in school (Florida Elementary). We got to know Grandpa & Grandma Townsend and Grandpa & Grandma Sasaki, enjoying our times with the family. I especially treasure my friendship with you, Laralyn. It seems we can pick up where we left off, even after a few years have passed. My boys still refer to you as "Aunt Laralyn" and have fond memories of visits to Columbus. Hugs and prayers for you from all the Herman's.

Diane Herman - October 01, 2025 at 01:05 PM

RJ

“ Richard, Carol, and Erika Jinbo purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Bonnie Sasaki.



Richard, Carol, and Erika Jinbo - September 30, 2025 at 11:25 PM

HH

“ I still have a sweet, obscure autumn song in my heart that she taught me in 2nd grade. She instilled a love of music in me. I started taking piano the following year, eventually becoming a music teacher myself. I'm grateful for her sweet influence in my life, and eventually my children's lives.

Holly Hershberger - September 30, 2025 at 09:49 PM

AE

“ Awesome Entertainment purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Bonnie Sasaki.



Awesome Entertainment - September 30, 2025 at 08:59 PM

PO

“ Pat O. purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Bonnie Sasaki.



Pat O. - September 30, 2025 at 08:47 PM

PO

“ Pat O. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bonnie Sasaki.

Pat O. - September 30, 2025 at 08:47 PM