



Ellen Kay Trimberger

JUL 15, 1940 - OCT 23, 2025



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CHAPEL
OF THE
CHIMES
OAKLAND

Funeral, Cemetery
& Cremation Services

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We are deeply saddened to report the death of our beloved family member, friend, and colleague, Ellen Kay Trimberger, of Berkeley, CA. Kay died peacefully on October 23rd, 2025, at the age of 85, surrounded by friends and family members.

Kay was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, on July 15th, 1940 and grew up in Ithaca, New York. Kay's mother, a multi-talented, artistic homemaker and her father, a prominent professor in the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, provided the family with the unique opportunity to live in the Philippines for a year when Kay was a teenager. This early immersion in another culture, just a few years after the devastation of World War II, had a deep impact on Kay's thought and future education.

She received her PhD in sociology at the University of Chicago. Kay taught at a number of universities including Columbia University, Barnard College, Queens College City University of New York, UC Berkeley, UC Santa Barbara, and San Jose State University. From 1981 - 2000 she was the Coordinator of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies at Sonoma State University. Kay was honored as Professor Emerita at Sonoma State University and served as an affiliated scholar at the Institute for the Study of Social Issues at UC Berkeley.

Dr. Trimberger authored many important articles and two influential books, *The New Single Woman* (2006), and *Creole Son: An Adoptive Mother Untangles Nature & Nurture* (2020). Kay also wrote about adoption in her blog, *Adoption Diaries*, for *Psychology Today*.

Beyond her academic life, Kay loved to travel, especially hiking in the Sierras and camping. "She got me to go places I never would have gone" was a thought shared by many of her friends. Kay loved the outdoors, beautiful scenery, and exploring new cities and countries. Kay was fiercely independent and truly loved her life in Berkeley, CA. She placed a high value on friendship and was known for her extraordinary generosity to friends and colleagues, going to great lengths to



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maintain ties with old friends while bringing new friends into the community she created around her.

In addition to her parents, Kay was preceded in death by her brother Mickey Trimberger of Charlotte, NC, and her sister Pamela (Trimberger) Castro of Middletown, DE. Kay is survived by her son Marc Trimberger of Berkeley, CA, sister-in-law Diane Trimberger (Mickey) of Charlotte, NC, brother-in-law Andrew Castro (Pamela) of Middletown, DE, nephew Michael Trimberger (Vanessa) of Wake Forest, NC, niece Beth (Trimberger) Benonis (Jim) of Charlotte, NC, niece Andrea (Castro) Doyle of West Henrietta, NY, nephew Peter Castro (Nicole) of Williamsville, NY, nephew Nicholas Castro (Candice) of Dover, DE, and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews.

Kay was an intellect, social activist, author, explorer, professor, mother, aunt, and above all an honorable person. She will be dearly missed by her son, Marco, multiple nieces and nephews, her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, and many friends and colleagues.

A memorial service will be held in Kay's honor at the Chapel of the Chimes Oakland on February 2nd, 2026, from 10am-12pm. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Sonoma State University Memorial Scholarship Fund in memory of E. Kay Trimberger.

<https://commerce.cashnet.com/ssugivetodev?itemcode=SSUDEV-MEMOR>





Events


Ellen Kay Trimberger

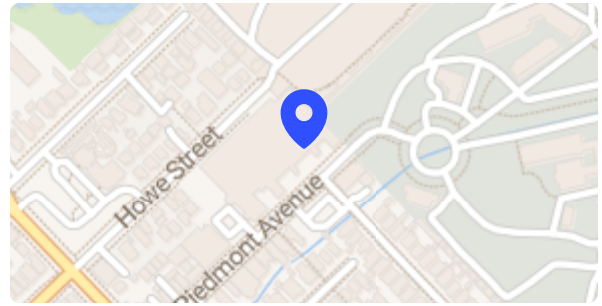
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Celebration of Life Memorial Service

 **Monday**, February 2, 2026

 10:00 AM PT

 **Chapel of the Chimes**
4499 Piedmont Ave, Oakland CA 94611





Tribute Wall

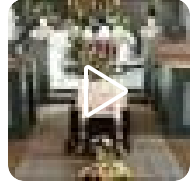
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Chapel Of The Chimes Oakland shared a **Webcast Video**.

January 10 at 10:29 AM





Media

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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Ellen by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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