

## OBITUARIES

## Kathleen Mary Balke

Kathleen Mary Balke was born Dec. 2, 1952, in Chicago, relocated to New Mexico in 1973 and received a B.S. in Nursing from UNM in 1986. She practiced as a nurse at Lovelace, St. Joseph's, UNMH and St. Vincent's hospitals, as well as at Loyola UMC and Loretto Hospital in the Chicago area. Her career was crowned by teaching nurses at TVI/CNM. Kathleen is survived by her son Stephen, daughter-in-law Michele, grandchildren Ashley, Sean, Saoirse, and Anya, and nine siblings and their families. She died at home in Moriarty surrounded by her family on April 21. A funeral Mass was held at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and she was laid to rest in Stanley Cemetery on April 23.

## Charlotte J. Drutok

Charlotte J. Drutok, 81, passed away April 27 at her home in Edgewood. Charlotte was born Oct. 4, 1925, in Staten Island, N.Y., to Harry and Henrietta (Prinz) Hartmann. Charlotte married John Drutok who preceded her in death in 2000. She was also preceded in death by her parents. Charlotte is survived by her son Harry and wife Virginia Drutok of Edgewood; daughter, Jacquelyn M. Bell; sisters, Ruth Butler and Helen Campbell; three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Arrangements for cremation were entrusted to the Harris-Hanlon Mortuary.



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## Everyone has a story

# Kathleen Ryan: 'Music and spirit'

*Every person has an interesting story even if she or he doesn't know it. Each week, our reporter calls a Tricounty resident at random to discover it.*

By Leota Harriman

"I was always fascinated by music, and I was always making up music," Kathleen Ryan Clute said. "When I was a little girl, my whole family knew I would be a musician." She remembers sitting at the piano at age 2 or 3, when her older sister started piano lessons. "From the minute she started lessons, I was fascinated with the piano, and sat at the piano, pretending I was playing."

Now a composer and pianist, Clute has lived with her husband Alan at Deer Canyon Preserve near Mountainair for two years, and describes the music she invents as "classical, or maybe new age."

Her resumé includes a double major from Duke University in music and anthropology, and a masters degree in music and piano performance from Claremont. She has received many awards and honors for her compositions, and has a re-release of one CD and two other recordings in the works for release this year.

Her music was featured on an Emmy-winning public television special in Iowa, and she has won numerous composing contests. She is now on the board of the Manzano Mountain Arts Council.

In sixth grade, "I realized all my friends that played instruments like flute and clarinet were in the marching band. I was not, I played piano. I didn't have the breath for wind, so I became a drummer," Clute recalled. "I was the first girl drummer in the junior high school marching band. All of the boys challenged me every couple of weeks, because they didn't think a girl could do it as well."

As a young musician, Clute played drum solos, piano solos, and would accompany vocalists and other instruments at school. At 16, she gave up piano lessons "because I wanted to be Joni Mitchell," she laughed. "Maybe I'm dating myself." She took piano lessons back up in

college, along with anthropology, which her mother thought was a more practical major than music.

"When I graduated from college, I worked as a medical researcher in a lab where I'd worked part-time as a student. I knew very quickly that I couldn't do that eight hours a day, five days a week—I was going crazy. So I started applying to graduate schools, and got my master's in music."

Clute's career as a pianist has included teaching, accompaniment of singers, instrumentalists, dance and theater, as well as recording and touring.

Of composing, Clute said, "It's lovely. Most of the time, I have a lot of music going through my head. A lot of it is bad—I'm great at stupid ditties and little phrases that don't go anywhere." Sometimes she composes at the piano, and "sometimes at the window seat with paper and pencil," she said, adding, "It's not physically taxing work, but it is very mentally demanding."

But Clute had not taken classes in music composition and didn't define herself as a composer. "It was about playing music I made up for me to play," she said. "I think what happened had something to do with discovering that people liked my music for itself, and not just for the way I played it," she said, describing the transformation in her understanding.

She was involved with a teachers' organization that had a composition contest, including a category for teachers, and said, "I entered a fun, kicky, wild piece, and it won first place."

She had entered the piece because it was the only one she had handy on the computer, she said. Named "Spare Change," Clute thought of the piece as "this little throwaway. I knew it was fun, had fantastic energy, and I liked playing it, but I was minimizing it in my mind. Then it won. The next

year I put in another piece, and it won second."

The following year, she entered a piece written specially for the contest, a teaching piece, which also won first place. "I started thinking, 'It's not just me that likes my music. The judges are music teachers, and composers, and they like my music.' I started thinking differently about it—that somehow made it real for me."

The teaching piece was a three-movement sonatina. "I had made up the last movement first, on the spur of the moment," Clute said. "It just popped right out. As soon as I wrote down the notes, I could hear the next ones." She had never tried to write a teaching piece, and said, "I had no clue how to go about it."

With one movement done, the other two remained, and "a real deadline coming on," she said. "The last month was a little scary. I had my first theme, and the recapitulation was obvious. I just sort of did it by the rules." Then with a week to go and the first movement still not written, "one morning as I woke up, I could hear how the section resolved. I said to my husband, 'Don't talk to me, I've got to get this down!' It was perfect. I didn't know how my mind had done it, except that I knew it was what I had wanted to do."

Listening to the recording for the first time, she said she "pounded the floor in hysterics, it was so exactly what I wanted it to be. It was a humorous and whimsical sort of piece that came out, and it met the requirement of the form but still sounded like my own voice. Until then I didn't know I could do that. Then I said I was a composer."

Clute says the experience of music occurring fully-formed can be explained two ways, which are not mutually exclusive: "One is that I had posed some very big challenges to my subconscious, which worked it

out." She continued, "The other is, I think it's the holy spirit, just this infinite well of creativity. All my music comes from spirit."

A hymn-writing contest at Duke University a few years ago looked for lyrics from students and melody from alumni. Clute downloaded the lyrics, and "went traveling," she said. She came home, and had a week to write the music before setting out again. "Then I said a little prayer to the holy spirit, and asked for guidance. I started playing this melody, and I liked it. I spent 5 or 10 minutes on it."

Duke liked the piece so well that not only did she win the contest, but the premiere date was moved up several months. "It's hard for me to say that one was composed. I had asked for help, and the melody came so fast. I just wrote it down." Hearing the piece live for the first time with hundreds of people singing it, Clute said, was a very emotional experience. "The really easy ones usually have a ring of truth, or not, immediately," she said.

Composing music now is more intentional, she said. "I think when I was first composing music I thought I had to wait for that creative spark. But actually you can ask for inspiration, and it arrives. You can even make up stuff just because, like that sonatina. It's like putting together a puzzle."

What is it about music? "My gut feeling is that because music includes tone and not just words, it has a more direct access to our feelings than words do. I challenge anybody to listen to the chorus at the end of Beethoven's last symphony and not simultaneously want to weep for joy and shout. People need that, something not so left-brained as talking," she said.

Kathleen Ryan Clute's music is available at [kathleenryan.com](http://kathleenryan.com), [cdbaby.com/kathleen](http://cdbaby.com/kathleen), and [solanoradio.com](http://solanoradio.com).