



Mary Ann (Rimmel) Griebing, 87, of Akron, Ohio passed away peacefully on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. She was born in Cleveland, Ohio, to Mendell Eugene Rimmel and Marthena W. (née Diver) Rimmel, on April 29, 1936. She is survived by daughters Karen Griebing (Robin Brown) and Margi Griebing-Haigh (Scott Haigh), and granddaughter Gabrielle Haigh (Mark Nelson). She was a curious, clever, and creative woman who was deeply ambitious on behalf of her family.

As the daughter of a Methodist circuit minister who would later become a professor of Calculus at Kent State University, Mary Ann moved many times throughout northeast Ohio and western Pennsylvania during her childhood. Her fondest memories from this time were of riding her tricycle in the attic of a church rectory in Greentree, Pennsylvania. She inherited her gift for music from her much adored paternal grandfather, Alfred Rimmel, who had worked as a child coal miner, but loved music, had absolute pitch, and reportedly built his own

violin. Mary Ann also demonstrated absolute pitch at age three and began piano lessons at the Pittsburgh Institute of Music at age four. Two years later she won a piano scholarship at the Cleveland Institute of Music and was thereafter a recipient of scholarships in piano, violin, and theory. She also briefly studied clarinet, but found that a transposing instrument was incompatible with her perfect pitch! During her childhood, Mary Ann was musically traumatized by playing hymns on badly out-of-tune pianos in the country churches where her father made his rounds on Sundays.

The Rimmel family settled for a time in La Grange, Ohio. Mary Ann graduated in 1952 from La Grange High School in Lorain County at age 15 and received a full scholarship to study violin with George Poinar at Baldwin-Wallace College, where she was a member of Mu Phi Epsilon music honorary and a charter member of the literary honorary, Lambda Iota Tau. The Rimmel family then moved to North Olmsted and with their own hands built a small home. But Mary Ann was desperate to spread her wings and to leave northeast Ohio, so she transferred to Ohio State University, where she majored in music theory. Her senior thesis dealt with a comparison of theory texts used at major conservatories. She also composed music and played in a string quartet and studied organ with Wilbur Held. As a member of the Ohio State University Orchestra she was thrilled to perform music by Holst and Vaughan Williams. Better still, after a rehearsal she met Stephen Griebing, who was pursuing a graduate degree in Chemistry but also played cello in the orchestra and composed beautiful chamber music and art songs. She was so flustered when she met him that she couldn't remember his name. Steve was instantly smitten by Mary Ann's bright blue eyes and intelligence, and within a few short weeks he proposed.

The couple married on June 24, 1956 and after Steve's period of basic training in the US army they settled in the Firestone Park neighborhood in Akron. Steve was hired as an engineer at Firestone Tire and Rubber, and Mary Ann worked as a typesetter in the advertising department of the *Akron Beacon Journal*. They welcomed their first daughter Karen in 1957 and their second, Margaret (Margi) in 1960. In 1963 Steve was transferred to the Firestone plant in Brentford (near London) UK. The young family settled in Wimbledon, where they were thrilled for the opportunity to immerse themselves in the new culture. Mary Ann quickly learned to negotiate driving on roundabouts the "wrong" way 'round in England. She studied organ in London with Denis Aldersea, took Italian classes, signed Karen up for

horseback riding lessons, attended Morris Dancing demonstrations, entertained frequently, and as a dedicated map enthusiast and voracious reader of travel books, planned the family's extensive trips throughout western Europe. Her dinner conversation with renowned Mahler scholar Deryck Cooke, at which she shamelessly boasted of her husband's many talents, seems to have resulted in the creation of the fictional character "Sir Arthur Streeb Greebling," who appeared shortly afterwards in several hilarious comedy sketches by Peter Cook and Dudley Moore.

Returning to Akron in 1967, the Griebblings reimmersed themselves in the musical community. Mary Ann and Steve joined the Akron Symphony Chorus, and upon the completion of the Blossom Music Center in 1968 the entire family participated in the opening season (and many thereafter) as members of the Blossom Festival Chorus, singing with the Cleveland Orchestra and many renowned conductors.

After a frustrating year spent substitute teaching elementary music at King School in Akron, Mary Ann launched her notable private piano, theory, and composition teaching studio, which included hundreds of students over more than five decades. Her studio was unique in its focus on ear training, sight singing, and adventurous repertoire. Her students won many prizes in both composition and piano performance at local, state, national, and international levels, and many have continued to pursue their musical activities into adulthood.

Mary Ann was an active volunteer in Akron's musical community. She served as editor of various musical newsletters and for some years wrote program notes for the Tuesday Musical Club concert series. She served as program chairman for the Children's Concert Society and Tuesday Musical Club. She was a member of College Club, an advisor for the Brahms-Allegro junior music club, and a collegiate level judge for the Ohio Federation of Music Clubs composition contests. She was a member of Tuesday Musical Club, the Fortnightly Musical Club, Friends of Music, and Ohio Music Teachers Association, where she served as commissioning chairman. For many years, she served as judge of the National Guild of Piano Teachers and American College of Musicians international composers contest. She was active with the St. Cecilia Choral Society until 2017, where she developed many wonderful friendships. With the connections she gradually built in the musical community, Mary Ann relentlessly encouraged Steve and promoted his creative musical endeavors throughout their long marriage, while also seeking out opportunities for her daughters. The Griebbling family was named "Musical Family of the Year" by two Ohio Governors: once in 1974 and again in 2004.

Her own compositions include works for piano solo, chamber music, songs with original poetry, choral music, and orchestral music. She was a member of Cleveland Composers Guild, American Composers Forum, and ASCAP. Her music is published by Hornist's Nest and Willis Music Company, and much of it is self published. Her music is melodic, employing extended tonality and adventurous rhythms. She sometimes wrote her own – frequently whimsical or humorous – lyrics. Her music was featured at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. in April, 2000 in a celebration of the 300th anniversary of the piano. Her compositions have been performed in Great Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, and China. Her work for clarinet and piano, *The Four Elements*, is included on compact discs featuring Aldar Janoska, clarinet and Silvia Vizvariova-Capova, piano; Robert Listokin, clarinet and Ann Listokin, piano; and by Dennis Nygren, clarinet, and Jerry Wong, piano. Her *Wild Wood – Quiet Wood* was released on MMC Recordings with clarinetist Richard Stoltzman and George Manahan directing the Warsaw Philharmonic.

A memorial concert of the music of Mary Ann Griebbling will be scheduled at a later date and will be open to the public. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Children's Concert Society <https://www.childrensconcertsociety.org/support.html> or to the Kent/Blossom Music Festival <https://www.kent.edu/blossom/support-kbmf>