



Evelyn C Keiser

JAN 12, 1924 - FEB 5, 2024



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Evelyn Cahn Keiser, a visionary pioneer and highly respected educator in the medical education field, died on February 5, 2024, at the venerable age of 100, in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Evelyn's unwavering dedication and tireless efforts profoundly shaped the higher education landscape in Florida and beyond. The Keiser School, which she co-founded with her son Arthur in a modest two-room storefront in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, blossomed into Keiser University. Evelyn played a pivotal role in expanding Keiser University into one of Florida's largest private, non-profit universities. Her influence was crucial in the university's growth and cultivation of its student-centered mission during her remarkable 40-year tenure from 1977 to 2019.

What started as a technical school became an Institute of Technology, then a College, and finally a University. From one student, the institution's enrollment swelled to more than 20,000 students. The University now offers degrees from associate to doctoral, serves students on more than twenty campuses in Florida and overseas, and includes both in-person and online academic programs, and twenty-six athletic programs.

From the beginning, The Keiser School featured a modular course curriculum that made it possible for students to take one course at a time and enroll on a rolling basis. This student-centered approach was at the center of Evelyn's vision for the school.

Evelyn's courage and dedication were extraordinary. Others often described her using the phrase "she thought she could, so she did." Born in 1924 in Philadelphia to Robert Cahn and Sophia (nee Ergang) Cahn, Evelyn was the third of four children. She was the last to survive of her brothers, Milton and Burton, and her sister Mildred.

Evelyn attended Philadelphia High School for Girls, graduating not only early but first in her class, and was awarded a four-year college scholarship to Temple University. Her college education was thus a result of her own efforts, since her father, believing that college and medical



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school were only appropriate for his sons, refused to pay for his daughters to go to college. She enrolled as a day student, taking several trains and trolleys across Philadelphia to class every day, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Medical Technology in 1945.

Married at 19 to fellow Philadelphian Lester Keiser, she persisted in her studies at Temple despite discouragement from her in-laws. During World War II, while still in college, she followed Lester to Army training posts in Charleston and Columbia, South Carolina, Birmingham, Alabama, and Nashville, Tennessee. For a brief period, she worked in the pathology department at Emergency Hospital in Washington, DC, while her husband worked as a pharmacist at Walter Reed Hospital.

After the war, the couple moved back to Philadelphia, and in 1956 Evelyn began her entrepreneurial career, becoming one of the first women to start a medical laboratory. She also taught laboratory sciences at the Franklin School of Science and Arts, while starting a family and putting her husband through medical school.

By the time her marriage ended in divorce, Evelyn was living in Hollywood, Florida. After a stint teaching medical laboratory technology at Charon Williams College in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, she decided to create with her son Arthur a student-centered and career-focused education institution, opening in 1977 using her divorce settlement and family assistance. Evelyn actively supervised the details of establishing a reputation for academic excellence. The medical lab assistants and technicians she trained were highly sought after by local hospitals. One lab tech in a doctor's office assured a Keiser family member, whose blood was being expertly drawn, that Mrs. Keiser was a tough teacher – “if you could pass her test, you could pass any State licensing exam.”

Evelyn used her imagination and experience to develop innovative curricular structures and cutting-edge diagnostic disciplines. In the mid-1970's she developed a curriculum for physician assistants during her master's degree program at Florida International University. Her prescient plan was skeptically (and shortsightedly) derided as “preposterous” by her professor. Evelyn, as usual, had the last laugh; she later instituted the plan in her own university, becoming a pioneer in the now-popular field.

In 1986 her dream of offering the highest quality medical lab training was fulfilled by the full accreditation of her Medical Laboratory Technician program, which she continued to adapt to stay current with the latest computerized lab diagnostic procedures.



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Evelyn was widely recognized for her accomplishments. Her remarkable contributions were formally acknowledged by the state of Florida in 2015 when she was inducted by the Florida Commission on the Status of Women into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame, a testament to her significant impact on the lives of women and all citizens of Florida. She also received an honorary doctorate from Beijing University.

Evelyn remained active as the eyes and ears of the institution well into her 90's, dedicating her life to her beloved College as a professor, program director, and chief academic officer. Her dedication was evident in her daily routine; she was usually on campus each morning before 7, after having bought fruit at the local supermarket to share. Her door was always open, and she urged College staff to remember that "students are number one." Her hundreds of graduation speeches were uniquely relevant to each graduating class- she discarded each speech once delivered, always starting anew. She worked until the age of 95, driving herself to work until almost the end, and never stopped being interested in the well-being of her University.

In recognition of her commitment to effective teaching, Keiser University's highest faculty honor, the Evelyn C. Keiser Teaching Excellence Award, is named in her honor. This award

celebrates faculty members who excel in proactive teaching and successful student learning outcomes, traits Evelyn exemplified.

In addition to the University, Evelyn's passions were travel and food, always shared with her family. Later in life, she started exploring the world; her life list included more than 60 countries on six continents. Starting in the 1980s, she visited at least 30 countries with her daughter, and beginning in 1996, Evelyn organized and paid for over two decades of trips for three generations of her family, preferring to share her success with those she loved. Her philosophy was that it was better to give from "a warm heart rather than a cold hand." Evelyn's generosity enabled the Keiser family to explore more than 24 destinations in 19 countries and four continents, and sparked an enduring love of travel in all her descendants.

A gourmet chef in her own right, with a Cordon Bleu certificate proudly displayed in her kitchen, Evelyn particularly enjoyed savoring the cuisine of the localities that she visited. She also shared her favorite recipes with family members, who enjoyed her Beef Wellington, Cherries Jubilee, and Bananas Foster, as well as her secret recipe for the best Key Lime Pie.



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In her late 60's, Evelyn underwent double knee replacement surgery. She became famous with the physical therapists for her swift return to work despite the pain. And in her late 80's, Evelyn took up the practice of yoga. This activity also gave her an excuse to cook breakfast for her family on weekends and to enjoy their company during class. She may have been an "old foggy yogi," but her competitive spirit led her to constantly surprise the yoga instructors with her flexibility and willingness to try new and challenging poses. She continued doing yoga twice weekly until her mid-90's.

Evelyn is survived by her three children Ellen K. Farren (Richard) of New York City, Arthur Keiser of Parkland, FL (Belinda) and Jeffrey Keiser of Pompano Beach, FL (Judith), and by her four grandchildren Elizabeth (Nico) and Robert Farren (Nicole), William Keiser, and Robert Keiser (Andrea), and her seven great grandchildren, Alexander and Caterina Piro, Juliette and George Farren, and Isabelina, Rosalina and Sarafina Keiser.

Services will be private at graveside. A memorial celebration of life is planned for later in the spring. Donations in lieu of flowers may be made to the Evelyn C. Keiser Scholarship at Keiser University.



Tribute Wall

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Judy Keiser posted:

There is a beautiful video on Youtube that Jeff made to celebrate Evelyn's 97th birthday. Enjoy! :
<https://youtu.be/pTgromNWmvY>.

February 10 at 5:54 AM



Memories only last if you share them

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



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