



Olga von Hartz Owens

February 16, 1924 - January 3, 2023

Dr. Olga von Hartz Owens, a career botanist, accomplished painter, avid sailor, and beloved aunt to two generations of nieces and nephews, died from natural causes at 98 in Chestertown, MD, on January 3, 2023.

The daughter of former editor-in-chief of the Baltimore Sun newspaper, J. Hamilton Owens, and Olga von Hartz Owens, Dr. Owens was born at home in Lutherville, MD. She attended the Park School in Baltimore.

She went on to study botany and plant physiology at a time when women were the exception in those fields, attending Bennington College in Vermont, the University of Minnesota, and Harvard University before earning her doctorate from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1972. She held a series of positions with scientific institutions, including the Research Institute for Advanced Studies in Baltimore, where she was an associate research scientist in the Bioscience Group. After earning her Ph.D., she served as a grants administrator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, DC, until her retirement.

Dr. Owens' lifelong love of nature and pursuit of scientific knowledge weren't limited to the laboratory. She devoted much of her free time to exploring natural areas throughout the continental United States, as well as in Hawaii, often in the company of family members, but also on her own in an era when solo travel was relatively rare for single women. She shared her infectious

enthusiasm for the natural world, especially with nieces and nephews, and later with grandnieces and grandnephews, all of whom adored her. She more than returned her family's affections, traveling long distances to attend their weddings, funerals, reunions, or just to visit. She also made a number of trips overseas, including to Italy, a journey she made in her 90s not long after recovering from a broken hip.

In addition to her love of nature and thirst for adventure, Dr. Owens was a dedicated painter who worked at perfecting her craft well into her 90s. She was the driving force behind the establishment of an art studio at Heron Point, the Chestertown retirement community where she resided beginning in 1996.

Besides offering a permanent location for artists to work, the studio was the site of classes, technique demonstrations, and critiquing sessions. Eventually, it grew so popular that Heron Point added a small wing to the building to house a bigger studio with copious large windows and excellent northern light. Dr. Owens had a one-person show at Heron Point and was selected for several juried shows at the RiverArts Gallery in Chestertown. She also provided many of the illustrations in the Heron Point publication, *The HP Beak*, and occasionally wrote articles for it. She was also a fierce advocate for the protection of Heron Point's environment.

Although Dr. Owens made most of her trips by plane or by car, she maintained a lifelong passion for sailing, even building a sailboat in her backyard when she was in her 70s. As a member of the Severn Sailing Association (SSA), in Annapolis, MD, she was a leader in establishing that group's O'Day Day Sailer fleet, in which she actively raced. She became the SSA's first female board member, another among many examples in her life and career where she was a trailblazer.

Dr. Owens was preceded in passing by her older siblings, James, Carl, Lydia,

and Gwinn and by her younger brother, Lloyd. She is survived by numerous nieces, nephews, grandnieces and nephews, and great-grandnieces and nephews.

Memorial services will be held privately.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested donations be made to ShoreRivers (shorerivers.org), in Easton, MD, or Compass Regional Hospice (compassregionalhospice.org) in Centreville, MD.

Tribute Wall



“ *Olga von Hartz Owens*

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ *Olga von Hartz Owens*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *Olga von Hartz Owens*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM