



Ulo Kiigemagi

November 10, 1923 - January 24, 2018

Ülo Kiigemägi, age 94, passed away peacefully in the early hours of January 24, 2018.

Ülo was born to Arnold and Eugenie Kiigemägi on November 10, 1923 in Nõmme, Estonia. He left his home and studies in winter of 1944 during World War II, hoping to avoid being taken to an internment camp in Siberia, or forced into the Russian or German armies. He travelled alone to and across Germany for many horrendous months until he reached a displaced persons camp in Hamburg, Germany. There he met and later married Virve Õunapuu on June 26, 1948. His first child, Laura, was born there. In October 1949, they immigrated to the United States and settled in Portland, where his second child Mai was born. After surviving with a number of menial jobs in the Portland area, he became a student at Lewis and Clark College and graduated at the top of his class in Chemistry in 1952. In 1954, he secured a research position in the chemistry department at Oregon State College. The family moved to Corvallis, where Karan and Peter were born. There he worked for the next 30 years, completing his career as a Senior Instructor Emeritus in 1985. Once the children were raised, Ülo and Virve began taking classes in photography, botany and Oregon's natural history, and traveling widely around the state. After his retirement, they took several international trips until an accident took her from him in 1989. Ülo continued to travel extensively with art, music, and natural history groups, visiting 48 countries,

eventually even to newly independent Estonia and his childhood home. Through the years, Ülo volunteered widely and in many capacities, including at Grace Lutheran Church, Boy Scout Troop 163, and Good Samaritan Hospital. Ülo was a member of Audubon Society of Corvallis and attended many field trips—well into his later years—where he was beloved for his expertise and dry sense of humor. Ülo was a longtime supporter of the OSU Choral Music Department. He travelled to Europe several times with OSU choirs, including to his native Estonia. He was an active patron of the arts. He was well known for his photography and gave talks for the residents at care facilities for many years. Asked for words of wisdom for the next generation, he said, “Be kind and help one another.”

Ulo is survived by his children, Laura Bakken, Mai Kiigemagi, Karan (Jim) Fairchild and Peter (Cyndi) Kiigemagi, his grandchildren, Kristen Keating, Micah Gathercoal, Emily Egan, Stefan Bakken, Karl (Karla) Fairchild, Jeremy (Katie) Bakken, and his great grandson Theo Bakken. In Estonia he is survived by his sister Inge Etverk and many nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his wife, Virve.

Memorial contributions may be made in his name to the OSU Music Department or Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

A memorial service will be held to celebrate his life on February 23 at 11 am at Grace Lutheran Church in Corvallis, Oregon.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB **23**. 11:00 AM (PT)

Grace Lutheran Church
435 NW 21st St
Corvallis, OR 97330

Tribute Wall



“ I was sorry to learn of Ulo’s passing. I have fond memories of the time that I was able to spend with him, and I’ll never forget his smile and his passion for life. My grandmother, who I never met, was from Lithuania, another Baltic country, and I always imagined—and hoped—that in many ways she was like Ulo. He was a remarkable man, and his spirit will live on in the many lives he touched.

John Egan
New Orleans, Louisiana

John Egan - February 18, 2018 at 11:00 PM

KF

Thank you very much, John, what a nice remembrance!

Karan Fairchild - March 06, 2018 at 03:40 PM

TP

“ I shared many wonderful birding trips with Ulo over the past 30 years including us being roommates on many of them. He will be my friend forever. Tom Penpraze

Tom Penpraze - February 16, 2018 at 09:05 PM

KF

Thank you so much, Tom, that's lovely!

Karan Fairchild - March 06, 2018 at 03:39 PM



“ 2 files added to the album *New Album Name*



McHenry Funeral Home - February 05, 2018 at 11:57 AM

KB

“ *I only recently joined the Kiigemagi family, marrying Ulo's grandson Jeremy in 2016, but was able to spend time with Ulo on two trips to Oregon. What an amazing man. Kind, quiet and with this incredible intelligence and understated sense of humor. I was fortunate to hear some of his en-route to America stories on these trips. I see a lot of Ulo in Jeremy and am grateful that he inherited some of his grandfather's traits.*

Ulo will be missed, but he will surely be remembered for all his community involvement and the legacy he has left in Corvallis!

*Big hugs to the whole family,
Katie Bakken
Turner Valley, Alberta*

Katie Bakken - February 02, 2018 at 12:54 PM

KF

Thank you, Katie, that's very nice! It's so good that you and Ulo were able to meet. Thanks for sharing the pictures too!

Karan Fairchild - February 05, 2018 at 01:52 PM

PS

“ In 1986 the Cape Arago Audubon Society of Coos Bay began a series of Oregon Shorebird Festivals, held every fall. Ulo attended every one. Each year the organizers would call attention to his attendance record. When he was 91, he said, "Only nine more to go."

I lead trips at the festival and Ulo was regularly in my group. He also came on several other trips I led across Oregon. We had a special bond. The twinkle in his eye, his smile, and his wry wit enlivened each outing.

*Paul T. Sullivan
McMinnville*

Paul T. Sullivan - January 29, 2018 at 05:24 PM

KF

Thank you, Paul, that's very sweet!

Karan Fairchild - January 31, 2018 at 10:55 AM

KC

“ Ulo gave me my very first job as an undergraduate student at Oregon State University. Washing dishes in his research lab of the Ag-Chem building still brings back the smell of acetone and of frozen blocks of mint that needed processing. He was a kind and supportive supervisor -- of few words, but his twinkling eyes made up for the lack of conversation.

His love and admiration for the natural world, especially birds, was an inspiration. He demonstrated a strong-willed spirit that endured much sadness and tragedy but which decided ultimately on living life to the fullest.

Warm wishes of healing and love to the family of Ulo Kiigemagi.

Kate Campbell

Kate Campbell - January 29, 2018 at 04:24 PM

KF

Thank you, Kate. Fun to hear those details!

Karan Fairchild - January 31, 2018 at 10:55 AM

ES

“ *My sincere sympathy to Ulo's family. I was the music events coordinator at OSU for many years and still work closely with the music department. I got to know Ulo because he attended nearly every music event on campus. He loved music! He always gave me a warm hello and a few words about the performance and it got so I looked for him at our concerts. Ulo always attended our music graduation celebration, just because he got to know our students through their performances and I believe he enjoyed seeing them through their time on campus. I believe he even came this last June, and I was so happy to see him. The students were fond of him. I have missed seeing Ulo recently and have thought of him lot. He was a dear man and all of us at OSU Music were very fond of him. May he rest peacefully and may there be a lot of great music in his afterlife.*

Erin Sneller - January 27, 2018 at 11:00 AM

KF

Thank you very much, Erin, that is a lovely remembrance! It is so nice to hear other people's perspective.

Karan Fairchild - January 29, 2018 at 05:26 PM

“ I am very honored that I knew Ulo Kiigenmagi and blessed as well. He was a fine man, generous with his time and talents and a model of culture and a stalwart supporter of the arts and learning and the natural world.

I knew Ulo through two of his interests: volunteerism and his love of and devotion to music.

I first met Ulo when I started working as a library assistant at Murray Memorial Library, the medical library at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center in Corvallis, Oregon around 2004.

Ulo was a longtime volunteer in the library and a fixture of our work routine one day a week for many years. He was a tremendous help because at that time most of the medical journals were not yet digitized but arrived in print in the US mail. It was very important that the journals be checked in and their arrival recorded so that the library staff could be assured that the journals (many of which were quite expensive) were arriving on schedule and that we were not missing any. They also had to be shelved promptly and put on display so that they were optimally available and useful to the medical staff and members of the public who used the library. Many of the journals were heavy and often heavily wrapped and the check-in process was somewhat tedious and quite time-consuming. But Ulo never complained and got everything done year after year.

Ulo performed this task for many years and he worked diligently, efficiently and selflessly. It was not an easy job (I know because when Ulo was away on Audubon Society birding expeditions or extended trips of the Oregon State University choir I had to fill in for him on the journal check-in process and I learned how hard it was and that I was not as good at it as Ulo was). He was a huge help to the library staff and his unsung efforts were much appreciated and helped medical practitioners keep up to date and provided with ready access to the journals when they had a specific question about a medical condition or procedure. Ulo was a not only a pillar

of the medical library's smooth running but of the hospital's overall volunteer operations as well. He made sure that information needed for good medical care in Corvallis was available to all, free of charge.

He was also a thoughtful, sweet person. For example, when he returned from a trip abroad he often brought back small gifts to the members of the library staff. One such gift, a lovely little bottle from Prague, is still in use in my family as a holder of pills. It must have been hard to get the delicate object safely home from a long trip and it was a kind thing for Ulo to have done and was characteristic on his quiet generosity and kindness to others.

*After I left the library to take another job, I was able to encounter Ulo as a fellow audience member at various concerts around town. For example, my mother and I would often see Ulo at performances of the Willamette Symphony and always enjoyed chatting with him there. Ulo was a cultivated person and I well remember him in the library after all his work was done taking a few minutes to read *The New Yorker*, copies of which were kept in the library for hospital staff and members of the public who needed a break from medical concerns.*

Ulo loved bird watching and would tell us a bit about some of his adventures and sightings. He was an interesting, pleasant, hard-working, intelligent person.

I am glad I knew him and am grateful for all the work he did in the library and for his many contributions in many ways to music and wildlife conservation. Ulo's name was almost always listed as a donor in the programs of the concerts my family attended and we audience members and the musicians were direct beneficiaries of his generosity.

He will be missed.

Hope Leman

Corvallis, Oregon

Hope Leman - January 26, 2018 at 09:24 AM

KF

Thanks so much, Hope! It's really an eye-opener to find out some of the things our dad did, that we didn't know the details about! This is a lovely tribute.

Karan Fairchild - January 29, 2018 at 05:27 PM

LE

“*My sincere sympathy to the family of Ulo Kiigenmagi. He was a quiet man who had much to share. I will always remember going with Ulo to visit his wife when she was a patient at the Nursing Home in Corvallis following her tragic accident. It was a difficult time for him and the family. A mutual friend, Missionary Della Brown, would come to Grace Lutheran Church in Corvallis (where I was on staff) to visit Ulo and his family. When she came Ulo was often a guest in our home and it was there we learned so much about his life before he came to America. I count it an honor and privilege to have known Ulo. May God bless his memory.*

Louise Erickson

Louise Erickson - January 25, 2018 at 05:56 PM

KF

Thank you, Louise.

Karan Fairchild - January 29, 2018 at 05:27 PM



“ *My sincere condolences to the family of Ulo Kiigenmagi. What an amazing man and an amazing life. I'm so thankful for all he gave to our community in his life in work. I had the honor to have Ulo travel on several occasions with the Oregon State University Chamber Choir on overseas travel as a guest. I have so many memories, including a certain taxi ride in Varna, Bulgaria where we had a brief and eventful encounter with the Russian mafia controlled taxi service. And I remember when Ulo came with OSU students and faculty to watch the movie, "Singing Revolution" at the Darkside Theater. We had no idea of the Ulo's incredible life and journey.*

My thoughts and prayers for the family and my sincere thanks for the life of Ulo that so inspired us.

Steven Zielke

Associate Director, School of Arts and Communications

Patricia Valian Reser Professor of Music, Oregon State University

Steven Zielke - January 25, 2018 at 01:27 PM

KF

Thank you very much, Steve. It's wonderful to hear your memories, and those choir trips were an amazing thing for Ulo to be able to do! It's so nice of you to share.

Karan Fairchild - January 29, 2018 at 05:29 PM



“ *I am very sorry to hear this. My condolences to the family. Eil-Piret Multer.*

Eil Multer - January 25, 2018 at 09:12 AM

KF

Palju tanu, Eil-Piret.

Karan Fairchild - January 29, 2018 at 05:30 PM