

## Janice Whitener

Written by Karen Ventrone  
Friday, 13 December 2013 17:16

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Janice Robertson Whitener, Associate Professor of Family and Consumer Science Emerita at Appalachian State University and notable supporter of local folk and fine arts, died at home on December 12, 2013.

Born August 2, 1938, in Rockingham County, North Carolina, to the late William Owen and Grace Robertson, Mrs. Whitener grew up surrounded by generations of her family with a strong attachment to family and rural values. She enrolled in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1956, where she focused her studies on clothing, textiles, and interior design and received the Bachelor of Science degree in 1960 and later a Masters of Education in 1969. She joined the Home Economics faculty at Appalachian State University in 1967. In her early years at Appalachian, she met and married English professor Rogers V. Whitener and was his gracious partner especially during his time as Director of Cultural Affairs at the University. She retired from the University as Associate Professor Emerita after a distinguished career teaching, serving as an administrator, and mentoring students in the fields of clothing, textiles, and fashion merchandising.

At the age of eight, on a 4-H school trip, Mrs. Whitener encountered North Carolina folk pottery and developed a special interest in regional folk crafts. Besides teaching about fabrics and design, she encouraged local crafts as a form of community development. She served as director of a crafts program for WAMY Community Action in Watauga County, worked with the Southern Rural Development Center, helped develop the Blue Ridge Hearthside Crafts Cooperative, and served on the board of directors of Iron Mountain Stoneware in Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee. She worked with folklorists Ralph Rinzler and Nancy Sweezy to bring local craftspeople to the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C., and the Newport Folk Festival in Rhode Island and was instrumental in supporting the career of North Carolina Heritage Award winner Elsie Trivette. The Whiteners were also notable collectors and promoters of local artists.

Mrs. Whitener is well-remembered at Appalachian State University for her close work with students interested in textiles, clothing design, and fashion merchandising. She organized internships and fashion shows in the Department of Home Economics for many years and directed study tours to the New York City Garment District, to other textile and fashion centers in the South, and to Europe. In her later years, she brought her knowledge of fabrics and fashion and organizational abilities to the Tanner and Doncaster shops in Blowing Rock, and she continued her independent interior design business.

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In addition to her husband, Rogers Whitener, Mrs. Whitener is survived by a daughter, Katy Miranda Lipkus, her spouse, Isaac Marcelo Lipkus, and their son, Noah; a stepdaughter, Lori "Kim" Buntin; a sister and brother, Joan Robertson Pruitt and Kenneth Robertson; and a niece and nephew, Janeen Pruitt Mayfield and Mark Pruitt.

A memorial service for Mrs. Whitener will be held Sunday afternoon December 15, 2013 at 2 o'clock at Cheap Joes Art Stuff in Boone.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the Rogers and Janice Whitener Creative Writing Scholarship, in care of ASU Foundation, ASU Box 32007, Boone, NC 28608.

Online condolences may be shared with the Whitener family at [www.austinandbarnesfuneralhome.com](http://www.austinandbarnesfuneralhome.com).

Austin Barnes Funeral Home of Boone is serving the Whitener family.