



Katherine Jean Tarter

August 31, 1937 - April 29, 2025

My mom, Katherine Jean Tarter, (we called her Jean) passed away yesterday about 7pm. She was 87 years old. She had three children, seven grandchildren, 24 great grandchildren. There is no doubt that the legacy of this matriarchy she started was a huge joy to her.

If I wanted to know what was going on in the Tarter extended family, she knew. The Sisemore extended family, she knew. She would finish any information tidbit with “well, that’s all I know.” Every story or event was always positive, she so enjoyed being the mother of such a large clan.

She was active in her grand and great grandchildren as much as she could be. Just about every time I saw her, she had a story about one or more of them. Terri and I used to joke that she always bragged about my brother’s kids and his grandkids but not ours. At some point I realized she probably bragged about my kids and grandkids when she was talking with others in the family.

But it wasn’t just my brother. She would say, “Let me tell you about Leslie. Leslie is doing this; her kids are doing that. Did you hear what is going on with Evelyn’s kids? Evelyn also has a great new beau. Have you seen that new great grandchild of your Aunt Helen?” She loved talking about my cousin Bobby’s home in Florida.

Speaking of my Aunt Helen. I don't know when it started, but as the years went on, it seems my mom and my aunt connected on another level. I think they talked often. They managed to work out visits even though they were 3000 miles apart. When my mom reiterated a conversation, it was always with a laugh. Sounds like those two really had stuff to talk about.

She built a great relationship with my cousin Leslie. She loved to tell those old stories of watching Leslie and her husband Dan parachute out of airplanes. I think mom went up in one of the jump planes on one occasion. And she so valued Leslie's success, as a woman, in the business world.

She had lifelong friends. The greatest friendship was with Pat Musachia and her husband Larry; had to be over 70 years? And the fruit of that relationship? Pat and Larry today are still a second set of parents to me. And three additional sisters, Michele, Stacey, and Anna.

Even new friends, Doug, Megan, Carolyn, who were her neighbors where she lived in Cary. They treated her so well. Terri just had an experience when she ran into Doug and Megan's son, a young man in his 20's I think. Terri had not seen him since he was a child. He asked Terri if she was Jean's daughter. She said, "in-law". He smiled and said, "we love Jean."

She was a fantastic mother-in-law. No interference whatsoever. I can't say enough about how she loved Terri and my brother's wife, Debbie. Liked to remind us how lucky we were.

As a grandmother to my children, she engaged. She went to baseball, soccer, dance functions. She traveled with us to out of town events. If she could go, she went. On a few occasions she substituted for us as parents when we were traveling, and drove Jessica to a dance recital, and took Michelle to a soccer game.

I didn't like her meatloaf as a kid. I never told her. But as an adult, loved it. No idea what changed.

As a boy, she instilled in me the love of reading. She made me read a book before I went to sleep. I still do this today.

Her love of sports never wavered. I remember watching the San Francisco Forty Niners in the early 1970's with her (losing to Dallas) and watching that team for at least 50 years. While she lived in California, she acquired season tickets and went for years. She would ride a bus full of faithful fans from Concord into San Francisco. I would attend one or two games a year with her. She was in the stands when Dwight Clarke made the famous catch in 1981 that started the SF Forty Niner legacy of the 1980's.

Her favorites? Joe Montana, Clarke, Steve Mariucci. I had a work colleague who lived next door to Mariucci, when he was the Forty Niner football coach. As a favor to me, she asked him for an autograph, so I could surprise my mom on her birthday. He signed a hat, a picture, and wrote my mom a personal note.

She loved those San Francisco Giants. She didn't like the fact that she couldn't watch the games live out in North Carolina, because of the time zone. She would always say how nice it was, when visiting Pat and Larry in Fresno, that she could watch the game LIVE!

She taught, I think, all of us kids, grandkids (and maybe others) how to play progressive rummy and a game we called "13". You better have your coin purse ready because you must pay up if you lose.

What I probably think is her greatest legacy? She spawned a growing family of believers in Jesus Christ. This is my take on how this happened.

Back in San Jose, in the 1960's, we lived in a house on Kimberly Drive. A few blocks away was a small Reformed Church, called the Church of the Chimes.

Every Sunday, she would get up in time to get us kids (me, by bother Rick, my sister Kathy), and make us go to Sunday School. We didn't want to go. We wanted to watch morning cartoons. Each Sunday, we would try to be as quiet as possible so we wouldn't wake her. If she overslept, we could watch cartoons. It never worked, somehow, she always woke up, and got us off to church.

She also signed me up for a church class during school hours once a week. Maybe first grade? I liked it, but I wanted to be catholic. They got to ride a bus to their catechism class. I just walked across the street to a neighborhood home.

For me, I made a confession of faith at the Church of the Chimes at a youth group meeting at age 13. All these years later, children, spouses, grandchildren, more spouses, then great grandchildren, and I think the believers in this group of over 40 people is close is darn near 100%. Stunning to me.

Now mom was not interested in "religion". Years ago, we stopped talking about it. I think the organized church hypocrisy that is prevalent caused her to shy away. She would attend easter services often with us. She like to mention certain sports figures were "Christians". And as I have been cleaning up her papers, I found several bible references, and probably something that gave me great comfort. A certificate recognizing her public baptism in 1949. She would have been 12 years old.

Now that my remaining time will be without her, I am grateful for the great memories she left me. I can see her on the front of my boat, just enjoying the moment. Reminding me what idiots all those men in congress are. How Steph Currie is such a special man, not just because of basketball, but look at that woman he married. I am who I am because of the great Mom, God gave me. What a blessing.

Tribute Wall



“ *Some of my best childhood memories include Aunt Jean. I could listen to her talk for hours, I soaked up the stories she shared about the people and places she visited. She was loved by so many and I will always be thankful for the time I had with her. Praying for you and your family!* ”

Christine Monroe - May 12, 2025 at 02:06 PM



“ *Tom & Gia purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Katherine Jean Tarter.* ”



Tom & Gia - May 01, 2025 at 01:04 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Katherine Jean Tarter.* ”



May 01, 2025 at 12:20 PM

LG

“Ronn, thank you for bringing back to me so many memories of your mom. I remember your house on Kimberly Drive, I remember you had the longest phone cord because Aunt Jean talked to her friends while she made dinner. She always made me laugh as a child and right up to adulthood.

I remember her telling my mom way back when we were, well I was, very young that she intended to get involved with sports. She said if she wanted to spend quality time with her family this was the best way to do it. My mom thought she was crazy! Look how it worked out for all of you.

She was such a comfort to me when my own mom died. I will never forget she said, "I've lost one of my best friends." Now we have all lost a light in our lives.

Hugs to y'all, Laura

Laura Green - May 01, 2025 at 11:19 AM



“Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Katherine Jean Tarter.



May 01, 2025 at 11:14 AM