

## Harlanite Schack, 60 featured in W-H Column

Janet Schack, 60, Omaha, died in late May. She was a former Harlanite who was featured in the following column by Omaha World Herald writer Michael Kelly.

### HER DAUGHTERS "ALL AMERICAN"

Schoolteacher Janet Schack called her Colombian-born adopted daughters her "All-American girls".

Indeed, Luzann, 22, and Vanesa, 21, speak with the non accented tongue of those who grew up in the American Midwest. Both graduated from Millard South High School and attend Metro Community College, and neither carries a trace of her Spanish-speaking early years.

Miss Schack, who never married, was in her mid-40s when she adopted 6-year-old Luzann in 1979 and 8-year-old Vanesa in 1981. She did so despite opposition from friends and relatives who said she was too old to become a mother — especially the mother of abandoned girls from a foreign country.

She laughed and said love was the universal language that would overcome all communication barriers.

Miss Schack, it turned out, was right.

"I have a great life, a wonderful life," said Vanesa Lingle, who married a year and a half ago. "Mom taught me values and gave me great opportunities."

Said Luzann Schack: "She gave us a new life, education, love — things we wouldn't have had."

A native of Harlan, Iowa,

Jan Schack played the organ in church at 11. A graduate of Drake University, she received a master's degree from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and taught in the Omaha School District for 34 years.

She retired from the classroom a few years ago but continued giving piano lessons. On April 25, her students performed in a recital.

Among the students was an adult, Dr. Victoria Maclin, who had quit playing at 14 but resumed lessons under the enthusiastic instruction of Miss Schack.

Last Saturday, Dr. Maclin played the piano at Miss Schack's funeral.

### PRESENCE FELT

The physician played "Claire de Lune" by Debussy, which Miss Schack used to love hearing her play. Toward the end of the piece, Dr. Maclin said, as the music reached an angelic sound, she could feel her friend's presence.

"I could almost see her sitting there," Dr. Maclin said. "It was very special."

Janet Schack, her daughters said, had worked hard preparing for the recital at the Jewish Community Center. She hadn't felt well several weeks earlier, but was released from the hospital.

After the recital, she spent a week in California with her brother, Gary, and his wife.

"The last few years," her brother said, "we had gotten really close. She got a lot of joy out of real simple things. You could take her for a drive in the country and it was like going to Europe."

He said she seemed fine when she left.

Early this month she returned to an Omaha hospital, and doctors learned what was wrong — liver cancer. She began chemotherapy but returned

home for Mother's Day with her daughters and her baby granddaughter.

Soon she was back in the hospital and she died last Wednesday. It all had happened so fast, but family members said they were glad at least that she didn't suffer for a long time.

Miss Schack would have turned 61 on Friday. The next day, friends, relatives and students attended her funeral at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 84th and Pacific Streets. She was buried next to her parents in Harlan, an hour's drive northeast of Omaha.

"She lived life to the fullest almost to the end," Dr. Maclin said. "Her students, her daughters and her grandbaby were the lights of her life."

### FRIENDSHIP

Dr. Maclin came to Omaha from Chicago a year and a half ago, and Miss Schack was recommended as a piano teacher for the doctor's four children.

After visiting with Miss Schack, the physician decided to take lessons herself. A friendship developed. Miss Schack tutored the children in math and reading. She accompanied Dr. Maclin to Chicago to hear the Lyric Opera.

Dr. Maclin delivered Vanesa's baby.

"Jan was a very pivotal figure for us, a gifted, wonderful teacher who was like a member of the family," Dr. Maclin said. "She taught with love and encouragement. Even though she's gone, she lives on in our family."

Miss Schack overcame numerous obstacles and frustrations in adopting her daughters, who weren't natural sisters. Vanesa remembers a younger sister, Monica, and Miss Schack in recent years tried unsuccessfully to find her.

Vanesa named her baby Monica, after her lost sister from Columbia.

Jan Schack's daughter described her as patient, loving and supportive.

"She made a lot of sacrifices for us," Vanesa said.