



JoAnn "Jan" Barnett Shipps

October 4, 1929 - April 14, 2025

JoAnn "Jan" Barnett Shipps, Ph.D., 95, passed away peacefully April 14, 2025 at Cedar Creek Assisted Living in Bloomington, Indiana. Family had gathered to care for and be with her during her last days. A long-time resident of Monroe County, Jan was born on October 4, 1929 in Hueytown, Alabama. She married Anthony "Tony" Wimberly Shipps on May 25, 1949, and he preceded her in death in April 2021 after 72 years of marriage.

Jan was Professor of History and Religious Studies at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis for over four decades. She was one of the most trusted and esteemed authorities in Mormon History, a field of study which previously had been dominated by male scholars who were themselves faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Her interest in Mormonism was sparked when she lived briefly with her young family in Logan, Utah. As a non-Mormon, Shipps played a crucial role in legitimizing Mormon Studies as a credible academic discipline within the national historical narrative. She was widely respected in Mormon and secular historical circles for her ability to understand Mormonism on its own terms while maintaining sufficient distance as an outsider. She was the first non-Mormon and the first woman elected president of the Mormon History Association.

She published two books, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*

(1985) and *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (2000) in which she interweaves her own history of Mormon-watching with 16 essays on Mormon history and culture. These two publications are acknowledged as the central foundations of the study of Mormon History. Her essay, "An Interpretative Framework for Studying the History of Mormonism", was chosen as the introductory article to the *Oxford Handbook of Mormonism* published in 2015. In 2010, Professor Emerita Shipps was the chosen speaker at the "Last Lecture" series at IUPUI.

Jan and Tony spent their later years on a forested property near Bloomington they called "Balmy Gilead Farm." They were not farmers, but used the Biblical reference to reflect the peace and beauty they sought and received there. Everyone, especially their grandchildren, enjoyed unearthing geodes, seeing the deer arrive for daily feedings of corn, and feeling the hummingbirds buzz around their heads as they fed at the dozen feeders hanging on the porch. Jan and Tony loved to invite colleagues, friends and family for hikes in the woods and then serve a hearty dinner. Cooking in Jan's kitchen was always a group event because her dinner preparation was often a bit disorganized, usually due to her long hours writing or teaching. Guests often found it advantageous to don an apron to help speed things along; peeling, stirring, preventing overcooking and setting the table. Her lack of planning actually led to a richer experience for all involved by giving everyone an opportunity to contribute their gift to the meal. In Jan's presence, we were praised, encouraged, and given unconditional love that helped us all along our journey. It is Jan's grateful and selfless spirit that will be missed by all who knew her.

She is survived by her son, Stephen Shipps (Teri); granddaughter, Lindsay Haake (Daniel); four great-grandchildren; nephews Fr. Frank Bede Shipps, Thomas Shipps (Lucy), Doug Barnett (Lorraine); nieces Tracie Vicario (Larry), Mary Ellen Siebert; and her devoted personal assistant, Liane Johnson,

who was her “bonus daughter.” Jan was preceded in death by her husband, Tony; grandson, Lorin Shipps; brothers Bill and Bernard Barnett; sister, Sue Parish; and nephew, Karl Shipps.

The family wishes to thank the staff at Cedar Creek Assisted Living for their many years of excellent care and love provided to both Tony and Jan; Heart to Heart Hospice for their compassion and guidance during Jan’s last days, and ultimately David Shirley of Allen Funeral Home, who once again made our family feel very cared for and handled the arrangements for Jan’s private graveside service.

In memory of Jan...

Since Jan herself spearheaded the Shipps Professional Travel Award for Junior Faculty several decades ago, we know she would be delighted to see travel fund continue serving junior faculty on their academic journeys.

Gifts may be mailed to Indiana University Foundation, PO Box 6460, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

Please note your gift is for the SHIPPS TRAVEL FUND.

A tribute from The Salt Lake Tribune can be found here:

https://www.sltrib.com/religion/2025/04/15/jan-shipps-giant-mormon-studies/?fbclid=IwY2xjawJvYTJleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHtVIX48iAZ9MEGvmo0kaOCQ6w0ENVE0G-jh5iHAaxBNHU19yscDyuaG55-gS_aem_0W1hMq3szjGNgvkUQLrLMw

Tribute Wall



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Liane Johnson - April 28, 2025 at 12:36 PM