

Frederick J. & Loretta Baker Pohl Memorial Endowment



Education was an important aspect in the lives of Fred Pohl and Loretta Baker Pohl because they were both teachers. Fred retired from the New York educational system after many years of teaching at Boys High School in Brooklyn, and Loretta taught piano her whole life. In her teens, she began to give lessons in the homes of her students, and she eventually opened her own studio in the old Westfield Professional Building before it burned down. In the last years of his life, Fred

was very proud of his status as the oldest living alumnus of Amherst College.

Fred Pohl was born in 1889, and he graduated from Amherst College in 1911. He earned his Master of Arts from Columbia University in 1914, and he pursued his doctoral studies at Columbia. During his lifetime, Fred was an author, playwright, drama coach, teacher, artist, lecturer, and philosopher. He wrote his first play in 1920, and nine more of his plays were published in 1925. Intrigued by Viking exploration, Fred wrote seven books about ancient transatlantic voyages to America. He also authored two books about William Shakespeare. Fred's professional achievements are very impressive.

Fred came to Westfield after he married Loretta Baker in 1980. Both of them lost their spouses in 1978 and they met while vacationing in Florida. At the time of their marriage, Fred was 90 and Loretta was 74, but they were young at heart! After almost seventy years of living in Brooklyn, Fred took to the small-town life of Westfield immediately. It reminded him of his own upbringing in Durham, New York, as well as his happy years at Amherst College. Living in Westfield helped to rekindle Fred's love of painting. He created several canvases of the Westfield landscape, and he had a month-long exhibit of them at the Westfield Athenaeum.

Loretta's life was forever changed with her marriage to Fred. Loretta Champagne Baker had the ability to bring life and joy wherever she went. Her piano playing was exquisite, but her endless wonder and optimism brightened the lives of those around her. She taught piano her entire life and did not retire from teaching until the age of 83! Loretta was also the musician for the Westfield Rotary Club for many years, and she held that post until declining health made it necessary for her to enter a nursing home where she lived for the last year and a half of her life. Fred's background and story-telling capabilities were not lost on Loretta, and she enjoyed endless conversations with him. She and Fred had plenty of time to talk while they traveled extensively after their marriage. Traveling was one of their favorite pastimes throughout their years together.

The main thread running through both their lives was their belief in the youth of the world, and their desire to educate – each in their own way – the children and adults who crossed their paths. Fred was ever the lecturer. There wasn't much conversation when Fred was in the room, partly because his

hearing loss made it difficult, but primarily because there was a lot of listening to the stories he had to tell! Fred thoroughly enjoyed telling his stories right up until his death at age 101.

Their desire to educate is what prompted Fred and Loretta Baker Pohl to participate in the Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of Westfield. The idea that their legacy would benefit students for all the years to come meant that they could continue to contribute to the youth of Westfield. Fred died in 1991, and Loretta Baker Pohl died at age 96 in 2002, yet they live on through this scholarship.

Lovingly written by: Celeste Champagne, niece of Loretta Baker Pohl

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