



**Barbara Lee Shaw**

Barbara Lee Shaw, called "Nalotuesha" by the Maasai in Kenya, died of fallopian cancer at her home in Washington, DC on October 17, 2013 surrounded by her loving family and friends. She was 70 years old. Nalotuesha means "The One Who Comes With The Rains," a felicitous name in the drought-prone land of the Maasai.

Barbara worked in Kenya to end childhood marriages and FGM by empowering Maasai girls and women through education. She founded the Maasai Girls Education Fund in 2000 to provide scholarships for Maasai girls and training for Maasai women, and served as its President until her death. She spent up to two months per year among the Maasai in the Kajiado District where her Kenya office was located.

Barbara demonstrated to the Maasai community that educating girls is a good investment, as educated girls get jobs and support their families. As it became clear that this financial support was greater every year than the one-time bride price of several cows, the community began to support Barbara's work. The Maasai women always did.

The original inspiration for Maasai Girls occurred during a photography trip Barbara took in 1999, where she camped among the Maasai at a gathering where warriors would become junior elders. There she met a young Maasai girl who touched her deeply—one of her father's many children who would have had no chance of ever going to school. True to her generous spirit, Barbara appealed to the father of the girl, and the first of many scholarships was sealed. This was the birth of the Maasai Girls Education Fund, and what led to Barbara dedicating the last 14 years of her life to educating Maasai girls and empowering Maasai women.

Thanks to Barbara's efforts, today more than 130 Maasai girls have received scholarships, which are maintained until they have the knowledge and skills needed to be independent. In addition, thousands of Maasai girls, boys, women, and chiefs have attended Community Workshops held by Barbara's organization to promote better health and economic well being for present and future generations.

Barbara co-founded the Center for International Environmental Law in London, England and Washington, DC in 1989 with her husband, Durwood Zaelke and others. She also co-founded the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development with her husband in 2000, in Washington, DC and Geneva. She graduated from Oxon Hill High School, received her B.A. from the University of Maryland, and her MBA from Simmons College in Boston.

Born on June 12, 1943, Barbara was the daughter of Lillian Flowers Connelly and Ralph D. Shaw. She is survived by her husband of 37 years, her children, Tracey Pyles, Todd and his wife Kathy Pyles, six grandchildren, Cassidy Paradis, Hannah and David Pyles, Katie, Annie and Emily Fox, and her four cherished "Sister Friends," Charlene Goss, Faye Fuller Reed, Terese Lily, and Margie Muth. She is also survived by her brother, Ralph D. Shaw, Jr., her niece, Shelly Hull, and nephew, Michael Shaw.

Her death is mourned the world over, as Barbara inspired people everywhere with her courage, her kindness and generosity, the depth of her convictions, and her unwavering commitment to what is fair and just.

Barbara was a woman of action, who traveled the world and embraced people across all divides. From her South Carolina roots, to her native Washington DC, from Alaska, Boston, London, and Paris to Nairobi, Kenya and the Maasai lands of East Africa, Barbara made lasting friendships and left an indelible impression. A mentor and role model to many, Barbara was what many of us spend our lives trying to become, and those who are left to carry on without her are inspired to take heart and live up to her legacy with the strength that comes from having known her.

A naturally beautiful woman, Barbara's talents were many. She was a singer and songwriter, played the guitar and piano, and was a gifted writer. She was passionate about the ocean, rode and loved horses, found joy in gardening and beauty in all things natural. A talented painter and photographer, she was also a renowned cook.

Barbara was admired by many, but by none more than her family, whom she loved and valued above all. Barbara was a devoted daughter, wife, mother and grandmother who made every day more fun, more interesting, more important. She shared her deepest self easily and honestly, and taught the art of intimacy and love by her example. When her grandchildren listed their favorite memories, they found that their "fun Granna" was part of all of them. She climbed trees with them, swam the ocean, ran on the beach, read stories and all their books, wrote and sang lullabies, played games, attended plays and sports events, talked openly, and listened to all with an open heart and mind. She was our best friend and our most valuable teacher, and we are honored and inspired by all she was and all she did for so many.

In honor of Barbara and her organization, the Maasai Girls Education Fund, Barbara's family requests memorial donations to the Fund in lieu of flowers.

Donations can be made on the website, [MaasaiGirlsEducation.org](http://MaasaiGirlsEducation.org), where the story of Barbara's group is featured.

Barbara's husband, daughter and granddaughters will be in Nairobi, Kenya and will hold an Open House on Sunday afternoon, December 8th to celebrate Barbara's life. Private memorials will also be held at later dates in the Maasai Mara, Paris, St. Croix, Montana, and along the South Carolina coast, all places Barbara loved.