



## Alan Francis Skerrett

January 14, 1937 - January 19, 2023

Alan Francis Skerrett, 86, a mental health professional and community activist with life-long avocations in photography, music, baseball and the culinary arts, passed away on January 19, 2023, at his home in Hudson, NY. Alan was born in Staten Island, NY, on January 14, 1937, to the late Joseph Taylor Skerrett of Lincoln University, PA, and the late Anna Skerrett nee Cannon of Hudson, NY. He was raised in Brooklyn and Queens, NY. As a child, he spent many summers in Hudson with his maternal grandparents, and attended school there in 1948. The Upper Hudson Valley played prominently in the latter part of his life. A 50-year veteran in the mental health field, he served in a variety of positions in both New York state government and the not for profit sectors. His career began at Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, Queens, NY, where his mother Anna also worked. Later he served as mental health supervisor for the Manhattan Detention Complex in Lower Manhattan, AKA, The Tombs, and on a multi-disciplinary regional training team dedicated to bringing staff at various psychiatric hospitals in line with the then new concept of community psychiatry. He lived and worked in the New York City area until he relocated to Albany in 1980 upon being offered positions in social work and in staff training at the Capital District Psychiatric Center (CDPC). In 1989, he moved to Columbia County, NY, having accepted a position as director of the psychiatric residence, The Philmont Hearth, where he worked until his retirement. Alan was a natural leader and a dedicated, “change agent”, as he liked to call it, with a passion for raising consciousness to improve the lives of the

underserved and disenfranchised, both professionally and through community activism. In his retirement he devoted himself to serving the Hudson community where he was a valued contributor to a number of community and mental health organizations. Among his many notable roles, Alan served as Executive Director of the Columbia County NAACP, and as Chairman of the Board of the Staley B. Keith Social Justice Center Inc., an organization that advocates for the dignity and rights of formerly incarcerated persons through the Re-Entry Columbia program. He also supported the Greater Hudson Promise Neighborhoods, the Hudson Catskill Housing Coalition, and the Watershed Center. He provided mentoring to many young community leaders and was always ready to lend a helping hand. His integrity, wisdom and generosity touched hearts and influenced positive change.

Alan was passionate about music and had knowledge of multiple venues. He developed a taste for jazz from his father's generation; an uncle was a saxophonist. As a young adult he was in a doo-wop singing group, and was an acquaintance of Little Anthony and The Imperials, among others. A lifelong rock fan, Alan was at the Woodstock Music Festival. His all-encompassing taste in music was apparent as the host of the music show Crossroads in Rhythm for radio station WGXC 90.7 FM, an affiliate of the Pacifica radio network in Acra and Hudson, NY. He loved WGXC and played an important role in its development. His radio show was a listener favorite, especially when he sang along on-air. Alan's last show was on December 15, 2022. As a young adult, Alan studied commercial and portrait photography at the NY Institute of Photography and attended workshops conducted by some of NYC's best photographers. Throughout his life he specialized in diverse venues including portraiture, landscape, seascape and still life. As a freelance photographer, he was retained for portfolio development by aspiring actors and models. His work has been exhibited in NYC and in Greene, Columbia and Albany counties. He was a member of the Columbia County Council on the Arts and served on the Advisory Board of the Hudson Opera House. Another enduring love of Alan's was baseball and at an early age he

developed a noteworthy talent as a pitcher. One of his heroes was Jackie Robinson, who broke major league baseball's color barrier as a member of Alan's beloved Brooklyn Dodgers. Edie Cannon, Alan's uncle, was a friend of Robinson, the two having served in the US Army together. One of Alan's joys was meeting with Robinson after the Dodgers won the 1955 World Series. Alan shared his talent for the game as coach of the Capital District Psychiatric Center's Women's Softball team, guiding them to win a State Agency Championship, and later as girls' softball coach in Philmont, NY.

Alan was pre-deceased by siblings Herman Mayo and Joseph Taylor Skerrett Jr, PhD. He and his late wife Gloria Skerrett nee Hampton had two sons, Alan Francis Skerrett Jr. of Washington, DC and Gary Skerrett of Bowie, Maryland, both surviving. He is also survived by his sister Diane V. Skerrett of Woodbridge, VA, and numerous grandchildren, great-grandchildren, cousins, nephews, and nieces. His later years were enriched by his partner, Jill Salerno, who aided him as he transitioned. His final days were marked by an outpouring of support and love from his family members, his many friends, fellow artists and activists, and former colleagues. Alan will be remembered by many with great love and gratitude. May he rest in peace. A memorial service to honor and celebrate Alan's life will be held on May 6, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. at the Solid Rock Church, 334 Union Street, Hudson, NY. A repast will be held immediately following it at the church, which will be by invitation only due to space limitations. In lieu of flowers, please give of yourself, as Alan would.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAY 6. 3:00 PM (ET)

Rock Solid Church  
334 Union St.  
Hudson, NY 12534

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# Tribute Wall

LP

“ I have been out of the area in the last 20 years. I lost track of Alan and thought one day I would find him on Facebook. I have never thought I would be finding him in an obituary. I am late in finding out about his death. Alan was a loving person who took me under his wing when I was going through issues of my own, esp with my family. He was sometimes 'dad' when my real father wasn't able to be dad. My memories of Alan will always be special.

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**Leslie A Pozarycki** - August 05, 2025 at 05:05 PM

SL

“ Alan Skerrett and I met in 1969 when we both worked at Creedmoor State Hospital in Queens, and we shared a life for a year. I remember the Mafioso landlord cutting off our electricity to punish us for being an interracial couple. We went to Woodstock together and our whole group - among the very few African-Americans present - missed the muddy first night by staying in a motel along the way. So no Arlo Guthrie or Joan Baez. But I can still hear Country Joe, The Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, and Janis Joplin singing in my head. Alan was one of the most important people in my life. He taught me, and gave me, so much.



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**Susan Levenstein** - May 27, 2023 at 04:11 AM

TS

“ I first met Alan in 1988 through the Columbia County Community Services Board. I was a new member and he was a legend! He was funny, kind and even patient as we worked through the challenges of delivering high quality community based behavioral health services to our community. He fully embraced the concepts of equity, inclusion, and diversity long before the terms were used in everyday conversations. Our paths have not crossed in recent years - but our past conversations will stay with me forever. My sincere condolences to his family and friends.

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**Tina Sharpe** - May 09, 2023 at 12:59 PM

DU

“ Sorry I didn't make it to your service, but I have been out of touch with my new role as health provider for my wife, Mary. But I see that your spirit is still alive and well, since you suddenly appeared on my cell phone at 3 pm, just as your service started. It has been a pleasure and honor to have worked with you over the past twenty years or so on a number of important projects and issues. Mary and I had some misgivings about moving up here, but they were all dispelled the moment we met you and heard of your reputation. And I'm sure God is now happy to have you as a compatriot. If there is anything that needs fixing up there, you are the man to do it. God bless. Alan.

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**Dan Udell** - May 06, 2023 at 03:40 PM

MS

“ Alan was a mentor to me since my days at Columbia-Greene Community College as a student there and when he taught with my mom, Professor Mary Davidson. He was also her neighbor and was a friend who became like family. He delivered the eulogy at my mom's service with eloquence and empathy. We shared a love of education, activism, and photography, and he was kind enough to share some camera lenses with me. In recent years, we gathered together for many events and meals. He's been supportive and loving, especially with my daughter who's looked up to him since she was a toddler and is now a teenager. He is and will continue to be greatly missed! Condolences to all of his family and friends.



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**Mary Sapp** - May 05, 2023 at 04:38 PM

RB

“ Alan co-taught Issues in “Community Mental Health” and “Abnormal Psychology” with Professor Mary Davidson at Columbia-Greene Community College. He was an incredible instructor, a kind hearted person and very generous with his time & money. After sharing his vast wealth of knowledge throughout the semester he ended our courses with pizza parties. Alan put me to volunteer work with the Capital District AIDS council for a year. Good rest you, Alan, good and faithful servant! Deepest condolences to his family.

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**Rev. Paul Wayne Benjamin** - April 26, 2023 at 12:49 PM



“ We had a great day at my son Zach’s graduation party at Lake Taconic this past summer. You will be greatly missed Cousin Alan and Always Remembered.  
Love Always Opal and family



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**opal carr** - April 24, 2023 at 05:49 PM