



## Aliene Grisso Hodges

December 30, 2021

Aliene Grisso Hodges, 89, of Portsmouth, passed away unexpectedly on December 30, 2021. Aliene was born April 17, 1932 in Roanoke where she grew up in a loving, Christian home with her parents (Charlie Bennett Grisso, Sr. and Lena Alton Kittinger Grisso) and a much beloved younger brother (“Junior”), who all preceded her in death. At Jefferson Senior High School, Aliene met Billy Hodges, with whom she eloped at the tender age of 19. Billy and Aliene lived in several towns around Virginia as they raised two daughters, eventually settling in Portsmouth. Starting in 1968, Aliene lived in the same house, in Merrifields, until her death. She worked tirelessly in her yard nearly her whole life, and many people who drove down Greenbrook Drive would wave to the “little lady with the white hair” as she gardened and beautified her lawn.

In every town she ever lived in, Aliene was an active member of the local Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is difficult to name any role at the Portsmouth (later Western Branch) church that she didn’t hold at one time or another. Whether it was leading children’s programs, being Sabbath School Superintendent, serving on the church board, or selling oranges, she always devoted herself to each position with diligence and led with enthusiasm. Even in recent years as dementia robbed Aliene of much of her memory and cognitive ability, thanks to the old-time gospel worship music at Adventist churches she attended over nine decades, Aliene knew hundreds of hymns by heart and would sing them by heart with great gusto, night and day. During the pandemic when she could no longer attend church in person, her daughter would telephone on Sabbath afternoons for an hour or more of piano playing while Aliene sang one hymn after the next. Aliene truly lived the words of her favorite Bible verse: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” And she did do all things: Living alone since 1977 could have been challenging for some women, but not for independent-minded Aliene! She lived to serve others, and especially loved feeding people, whether it was her own children and grandchildren, other family members, friends, her many pets over her lifetime, or even the squirrels and birds who hung out at the all-you-can-eat birdseed buffet in her backyard.

From 1967 until 2001, she worked at “The Newspaper,” (Landmark Communications),

starting off in the Accounting Department, but soon being “moved up” to the executive, third floor where she served loyally over the years as secretary and executive assistant to many of Landmark’s top leaders, including Bill Diederich, Dick Barry and Frank Batten. Landmark was not only where she worked, but also where she met her two best friends, Betty Moore and Carolyn Redmond. Like Aliene, they shared a love of the beach, and she enjoyed vacationing with each of them on the Outer Banks many, many times – even more when the trips included her daughters and beloved dog, Honey. In later years, she lavished as much love on three feral cats born under her deck as any pedigree pets. What extravagant care and pampering anyone within Aliene’s orbit enjoyed!

Aliene religiously read the *Virginian Pilot* from cover to cover every day, working its crossword puzzles, and poring over the Sports section. She was an ACC basketball fan long before games were televised, listening closely to the play-by-play on a small transistor radio at her kitchen table. After her daughters enrolled at UVA, she began to follow every Virginia football and basketball game. Aliene’s love of basketball went beyond the collegiate level, and her favorite NBA player was LeBron James. Her garage was adorned with posters of UVA stars like Ralph Sampson, and she kept a framed photograph of LeBron in her den, right next to those of her grandchildren.

After retiring from Landmark, Aliene began many years of daily water aerobics classes, first at the Portsmouth Girls’ Club (Girls Inc) and later at the YMCA in Churchland. It was never about exercise for Aliene; she was there to make friends – and friends she made by the droves. She loved monthly lunches with “the girls from the Y,” or with old friends from Landmark. She also loved to walk for miles every day, either at the Y’s track or around her neighborhood. Even as her health declined, she continued to enjoy going on walks with her amazing and dedicated caregivers for the last several years, Chlorine and Kathleen Ifill, whom she called “friends closer than sisters.”

At the end, when she had forgotten so much and lost so many parts of herself, the one trait that brought her and those she loved the most joy was her ready laughter at the slightest funny thing, and making others laugh, whether by dancing when she heard a favorite ringtone, making a spontaneous joke at the dining table, or singing silly songs.

Aliene’s parents instilled in her a deep commitment to hard work, humility, love of family, and most importantly, a deep and abiding faith in God, which guided her throughout life. Her daughters and their families were the greatest joys of her life. She is survived by her daughters Donna and Diane; her son-in-law Geoff Rudderow; and her grandchildren Chris Rudderow, Ben Iorio, and Leanne Iorio.

Aliene's unwavering devotion to her family, faith, and friends was her purpose in life, and is her legacy. The family will hold a private burial in Roanoke, Virginia, so that Aliene can rest in Christ alongside her parents and brother.

# Tribute Wall



“ Loving Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Aliene Grisso Hodges



Loving Funeral Home - January 05, 2022 at 12:09 PM

HA

“ I know this is a very late message of sympathy. I am just now learning of the passing of Ailene. Ailene was one of my very favorite patients as her Dental Hygienist for many years. Each visit, she shared an "update" on her family. She had such love for her daughters and their families. She was a very special lady, and a true inspiration with her always sunny personality. I know she is missed by many, including myself.  
Harriette Albritton



Harriette Albritton - March 20, 2022 at 04:17 PM

DB

“ Diane and Donna, Prayers are sent to help you through this time of loss. I always thought your Mother, my Aunt, was so beautiful and loving. I will never forget the summer I stayed with you for a week, when I was very young and you two were toddlers, she took me to church one evening. When we stood to sing a hymn, her beautiful voice resonated throughout the church and I could only look up and stare at her glowing face. I think my mouth hung open for the whole song! I was completely mesmerized by her voice. She was a wonderful person and I am privileged to have had her for an Aunt.  
All our love,  
Larry and Dee (Hodges) Bartram

Dee Bartram - January 15, 2022 at 06:53 PM

DR

Thanks for the memory, Dee. She always thought highly of you.

Donna Rudderow - January 16, 2022 at 07:20 AM

DM

“ Dear Donna and Diane, I was so saddened to learn of Aliene’s passing. She was a wonderful friend and coworker. The lights of her life were both of you and your children and she shared so many stories of her family with us. You have my deepest sympathy and I pray for peace for you both in the days and weeks ahead. May you find joy and comfort in your memories of happier times with your mom. Sincerely, Debbie Ballentine Meads



---

**Debbie Ballentine Meads** - January 05, 2022 at 06:43 PM

DR

Thanks, Debbie. I heard about "Debbie Meads" a lot in the later years of her career at Landmark. I know she valued your friendship.

---

**Donna Rudderow** - January 16, 2022 at 07:22 AM

TB

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



---

**Trish Boliek** - January 05, 2022 at 03:40 PM