



Elizabeth Duke

September 25, 2021

Elizabeth “Boo” Duke, 87, passed away on Saturday, September 25th at Sentara Obici Hospital in Suffolk, Va. Born in Suffolk, Virginia the daughter of the late Elizabeth Byrd Rountree and Miles James Rountree, she was predeceased by a brother, Miles James Rountree, Jr.

A 1952 graduate of Suffolk High School and 1956 graduate from Mary Washington College, she began her teaching career at Princess Anne High School in 1956. She taught one year in Broward County, Florida before returning to Portsmouth. She began teaching at Churchland High School in 1960 and retired in 1996 as Chair of the Mathematics Department.

During her career at Churchland High School, she sponsored many activities; among them, Junior class and Senior class sponsor, Tri-Hi-Y, and Junior Varsity Cheerleading. She was the first president of the Alpha Epsilon chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, a service sorority dedicated to excellence in education and leadership, where she maintained active membership for more than 40 years.

Throughout her career and into retirement, one of her greatest joys was tutoring local students, as well as adults. Her passion was always encouraging others to think for themselves, not just memorize formulas, but to “just play with it,” a saying well known to all her students.

She is survived by a daughter, Susan Duke Lawrence (Nathan), a son John

Duke; and two grandchildren, Gage Lawrence and Lucy Duke. She is also survived by her brother, Richard Rountree (Rite), a sister-in-law, Sheila Rountree Bell; and a host of nieces, nephews and extended family, including her beloved “guardian angel,” Leslie Gayle.

A Celebration of Elizabeth’s life will be held on Saturday, October 16th at 11:00 a.m. at Centenary United Methodist Church. As per her wishes she will be cremated.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to St. Jude’s Children’s Research Hospital (www.stjude.org), Union Mission (unionmissionministries.org) or H.E.R (hershelter.com).

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

OCT **16**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Centenary United Methodist Church
3312 Cedar Lane
Portsmouth, VA 23703

Tribute Wall

AV

“ Ms. Duke was the most influential and inspiring teacher of my life - including during my bachelors at the College of William and Mary and my masters at New York University. I was lucky enough to be Ms. Duke’s student in Advanced Placement Calculus my senior year at CHS in 1996. I credit my career to her early influence and when I get stuck on a problem I remind myself to “just play with it.” The way she attacked a problem, her Socratic yet warm nature, combined to make you feel you could accomplish anything if you just put your mind to it and had the patience and confidence of your convictions. I will never forget her and I pass on her teachings to my children now. I can only hope they have a teacher half as influential in their lives. Thank you Ms. Duke. I hope my words bring your family peace. You are eternal. - Adrienne Vaughan

Adrienne Vaughan - October 06, 2021 at 07:30 PM

BM

“ Mrs. Duke was my math teacher for 11-12th grade....and remember her fondly. She had a no-nonsense approach to most situations and was free with kindness, encouragement, or tough love whichever was most appropriate. I had a lot of the later....which, in the benefit of some wisdom, was exactly what I needed. She will always have a special place in my heart. ...not to mention that I met my wife in her class. Thank you Mrs. Duke...for everything!

Blake Melton - October 06, 2021 at 11:28 AM

BS

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with your family. Many pleasant memories both from the neighborhood and a student of a fine educator. Thank you for your patience and thank you too for your positive influence on so many young minds. God Bless you.

Brian S - October 01, 2021 at 10:25 PM

CV

“ Ms. Duke made a lasting impression on everyone she taught. We were stumbling through math and life and here adage “Just Play With It” was so appropriate then and still today. During my time at CHS (1968-1971) I probably had her 2 times if not 3. 25 years later my daughter was also fortunate enough to have her.

Carol Stewart Vaughan - October 01, 2021 at 09:55 AM

AD

“ Mrs. Duke was the class sponsor of our Class of 1967 at CHS and she was a great one. She not only taught things like trig or algebra but also things to help us in life. She had many rules like “absolutely no chewing gum”, “socks for boys” and “girls, sit and act like ladies”. We needed her rules—even if we didn’t like them at the time. She was one in a million. My deepest condolences to her family. May Gods grant you His comfort, peace and strength.
Ava Julian Dunlow

Ava Julian Dunlow - October 01, 2021 at 08:04 AM

DL

“ She was one of my favorite & best teachers at Churchland High School. I was lucky to have had her.

David Leon - October 01, 2021 at 01:48 AM

PH

“ To the family of Elizabeth Duke.
Boo was a great girl, I loved her. When I think of her, I will always hear her saying “Hey Babe” and I will smile.
My deepest sympathy to all of you.

Peg Hartman

Peg Hartman - September 30, 2021 at 09:03 PM

JB

“ Boo and I taught together at Churchland HS from 1960 to 1964. It was my first teaching job and she was my friend. We had a wonderful time together with many others-Movane Smith and more. She was a super teacher. I remember the boys outside of her room putting on socks before entering her class BECAUSE that was her rule!! socks with shoes. She reminded my friend for many years and even attended my wedding in NJ. She was very special to me and I feel awful that I have not talked to her in about 2 years. I will never forget her or her husband JC!! The Sunday afternoon get togethers when "the flag was up" are still very vivid in my mind. What a joy to call her friend and heaven is a really fun place with her there. Love to her children. Her friendship will always be special to me.

Joan Beale Brennan

Joan Beale Brennan - September 29, 2021 at 05:40 PM

SL

Thank you for these kind words. It means a lot to hear from her old friends and former colleagues.

Susan Lawrence - September 30, 2021 at 07:44 PM

SB

“ A wonderful Hunter's Point neighbor for many years; an awesome person; an exemplary educator; a wonderful friend. Condolences to the family, especially Susan and John for whom I have find memories from the neighborhood.

Susan Beasley

Susan Beasley - September 29, 2021 at 04:28 PM

JR

“ Enjoyed bowling with her at Western Branch bowling Alley. So Sorry to hear of her passing.

Joan Russell

Joan Russell - September 29, 2021 at 04:21 PM

SB

“ Mrs.Duke was the Best teacher I ever had in my life. She was a friend of my Mothers and she always asked about me. I thought she was amazing the way she could explain something so difficult and make it so simple. A truly amazing lady. Thank you for everything I will never forget you.

Stephen Boroody - September 29, 2021 at 09:08 AM

DB

“ My sincere condolences to Mrs. Duke family for their loss of a most incredible Mathematics teacher that ever lived to teach! I owe my career as a nuclear machinist and Optical Alignment company owner and president to her inspiration of teaching mathematics to me. I loved her dearly as a student! Such an inspiration to all her students and setting the bar for all teachers and the lost trade of “Teaching”. She made school fun and was so well versed to teach her skill and knowledge! I will never forget her and my heart felt thanks always to her. I was blessed and fortunate to be one her students at Churchland in 1978! May God Bless her soul and all her family at this time!

*Daniel “Scooter” Boham
Graduate 1978*

Daniel “Scooter” Boham - September 29, 2021 at 08:33 AM



“ Susan, John, Gage, Lucy, and family, please accept my heartfelt condolences on the passing of your mother. "Mama" Duke was simply the best! I cherish the many conversations and visits we shared. May the good memories you have of her sustain you in the difficult days and weeks ahead. With much love and respect, Marv

Marvin Fanny Jr. - September 28, 2021 at 11:03 PM