



## Emma Elizabeth Bowen

December 31, 2017

Emma Elizabeth Bowen, 75, of Portsmouth, died on Sunday, December 31, 2017, at Portsmouth Health & Rehabilitation. She was born to her late and beloved parents, Mary Virginia (Wildey) Bowen and Joseph Nickolson Bowen. She was predeceased in death by her beloved brother, John Abington Bowen. She is survived by some cousins from both sides of her family and some dear friends.

She attended Portsmouth Public Schools and graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1960, where she was on the newspaper and yearbook staff.

Emma received a B.A. Degree in English from Old Dominion University in 1964, where she was on the staff of the college newspaper and a representative on the Inter-Sorority Council from her membership in Virginia Epsilon social sorority. She also received a M.S. Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the College of William and Mary in 1972, where she was inducted into Kappa Delta Phi scholastic fraternity. Selection for membership into this fraternity was based on scholastic achievement and a recommendation from a member of the faculty.

She retired from the Portsmouth Department of Social Services after approximately 40 years of employment, 33 years as a full-time employee and

the remaining years in part-time employment as a retiree. She had a very extensive employment history, working as a Social Worker in child protective services, employment services, adoption, court services, family services, and day care, and with the community and media from her job titles as Special Projects Coordinator, Public Relations Coordinator, Community Resources Coordinator, and Volunteer Coordinator. She was the editor of the agency newsletter, Focus, for 5 years, a monthly publication with a circulation of 5,000. She served as Chairperson of the city-wide Multi-Discipline Team for child abuse/neglect and was first Chairperson of ACOD (Advisory Committee to the Office of the Director).

She made many contributions to the agency and professional organizations in the Social Work field, such as being Publicity Chairperson for both the Tidewater and State jurisdictions for the Virginia Council on Social Welfare (VCSW) and Arrangements Chairperson for a state conference held in Norfolk. She was named "Employee of the Month" in August, 1992, and featured in the Virginian Pilot newspaper for her work-related activities.

Emma was a life-long member of Monumental United Methodist Church and a member of the Portsmouth Kiwanis Club and the Portsmouth Executives Club. Also, she was an activity planner for Tidewater Singles, a social club for single people in the Tidewater area.

Emma enjoyed giving parties and planning social functions, and became very adept at this.

She was a friendly, kind, thoughtful, and generous person. Her priority was her family and friends, but she gave regularly to charities seeking her help. She adored her family and had a very close, loving, and caring relationship with them, a beautiful family life over the years. She served as a personal caretaker for her mother, father, and brother and got in-home care services for

her brother and herself when the need arose.

As Emma requested there will be no funeral. Burial will be private and held in Olive Branch Cemetery. Memorial donations can be made to Monumental United Methodist Church, at 450 Dinwiddie Street, Portsmouth, VA 23704.

A memorial service will be held at 11am Tuesday in Centenary United Methodist Church 3312 Cedar Lane, Portsmouth, VA 23703.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JAN 23. 11:00 AM (ET)

Centenary United Methodist Church  
3312 Ceder Lane  
Portsmouth, VA

# Tribute Wall

LS

“ Emma was a childhood friend of mine. We lived in the same neighborhood and we would ride our bikes and play with other girls. She lived a remarkable life. So many people will miss her.

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**Lynn Spencer** - January 24, 2018 at 07:20 PM

BB

“ Emma was a classmate at WWHS class of '60. I remember her as a very attractive popular girl. That pales in comparison to all the wonderful contributions she made to the Portsmouth community with her work in Social Services. What a meaningful life she led. So sorry to hear of her passing and so proud to have called her my friend.

*Bobbie Bynum (Barbara Holderfield)*  
Nassawadox, VA

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**Barbara H Bynum** - January 14, 2018 at 02:23 PM

MH

“ Emma Bowen placed a chubby 11 week old baby girl in our arms on September 9, 1982. We had been married for 8 years, and gone through years of fertility testing. After 3 years of waiting through Portsmouth Social Services for an infant, that day finally arrived. Emma did not know, but my husband had gotten out of the hospital from surgery and had a followup appointment at the Dr.'s office on the day we picked up our baby. I was driving and my husband held our baby in the car, after we dressed her in her white dress and bonnet. I believe Emma was as happy as we were, taking a picture of us all together.

*Emma was very sweet and kind to us through all the paperwork and waiting for our girl.*

*She visited in our home several times, and she was always thoughtful and wise regarding our many questions. I seem to remember a Virginian Pilot news story about her years after our adoption. Her life was full of many wonderful things; well lived, and always in service to others. I am so thankful for what she did for us. God bless you, Emma!*

*Jimmy and Mary Heath  
Carrollton, VA*

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**Mary B. Heath** - January 14, 2018 at 12:56 PM

JS

“ Although I did not have the privilege of knowing Emma, I did meet her brother John during my years with Chesapeake Schools and other agencies later on. He stuck me as a kind, considerate and intelligent professional. This announcement lists no other family, but if there are please accept my condolences as well as to the Monumental United Methodist congregation.

Jeffrey Shelton  
Chesapeake

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**Jeffrey Shelton** - January 14, 2018 at 09:07 AM

BK

“ Emma was a sweet woman who was always a friend since our days together at ODU in the early sixties.

I last saw her to chat at my Aunt's 100th Birthday last September. It was a delightful meeting.

May she be remembered for her many acts of kindness, and may she rest in eternal peace.

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**Bernie Kirsch** - January 01, 2018 at 09:41 PM