



Shirley Jean King Buchanan

February 3, 2024

Just three days before her 93rd birthday, Shirley Jean King Buchanan passed away quietly in her home with her two daughters and former student athlete, Susan Gallop Murphy, sitting at her bedside in her final hours. She is predeceased by her parents, Stephen Bruce King and Loula Marie Bradt King, and her husband of 47 years, Dr. Robert James “Buck” Buchanan. She is survived by her two daughters, Sharon Lynn Buchanan (Stephen Bowen) and Beverly Jean Buchanan; a brother, Donald Bruce King (Frances) of South Carolina; and nephew, Brian King (Faiza) of New York; and many cousins.

Shirley was born in Old Norfolk County, Virginia. When she was eight years old, her father purchased a 75-acre farm on Jolliff Road. She spent her formative years running and riding through fields and forests and was instilled with a lifelong love of Mother Nature and all her creatures. She attended Churchland High School where she played basketball for Gracie Lee Van Dyke and graduated in 1948 as Co-Valedictorian with her best friend, both then and now, Bette Hodges Jones. That Fall, she left for Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg VA, where she majored in Physical Education with a minor in English and became certified to teach. While at MWC, Shirley began to date Buck, who was attending VMI and whom she knew from Churchland High School. They fell in love and after graduating in 1952, they married and moved to Richmond for Buck to attend Medical School at Medical College of Virginia. In the Spring of his Freshman year, Sherry was born, and Beverly

followed in the Spring of his Senior year. Shirley began her teaching career during those years with seventh graders at Douglas Freeman High School. After Medical School graduation, Buck interned at De Paul Hospital, so the family moved to Norfolk. Then military service called, and they were off to Biloxi, Mississippi. After two years of service with the Air Force, they returned to the Churchland area and Buck set up the first medical office on that side of the Churchland Bridge. Shirley resumed her teaching career, with Junior and Senior English at Churchland High School where she sponsored the SCA and coached Forensics.

Even as a working mom, Shirley saw to it that her daughters had music, dancing, and riding lessons and she was a great groom at horse shows (no dusty boots in the ring!). In 1966, she transferred to Woodrow Wilson High School to teach PE. When Portsmouth annexed Churchland, she returned to her alma mater to teach PE and coach. Long before Title IX, girls' sports got short shrift, and Shirley dedicated herself to giving girls the opportunity to play. She coached basketball, field hockey, gymnastics, and tennis. The City did not pay her for her time and effort, but that did not matter. During Summers when school was out, she coached synchronized swimming at Churchland Swim and Racquet Club, putting on a show at the end replete with lights, music, and costumes.

Shirley retired from teaching in 1974 because Buck had closed his private practice and gone into emergency room medicine with varied times off. In 1976, Buck and she moved for the last time back to the family farm on Jolliff Road with horses, goats, dogs, and cats. They spent their new "leisure" time pursuing their interests including sailing on "Whimsey" a 34' O'Day. Unfortunately, in 1984, Buck suffered a debilitating stroke and he continued to live at home with Shirley as his sole and steadfast caregiver. After his death in 1999, she returned to her hobbies and activities: she served as an officer on a local and state level for the American Medical Auxiliary; she took long birding

walks all over the Commonwealth; she raised butterflies at home and taught classes on their life cycle at local libraries; she volunteered at the Botanical Gardens in Norfolk; she was an avid reader and bibliophile; she was a Red Hatter and truly enjoyed the friendships of some very special ladies; she was a Master Gardener, planting and nurturing the flora that always pleased her so much; she volunteered at Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve frequently circumambulating the lake and talking about the flowers and plants she knew so well.

Shirley was a wife, mother, and teacher. A brilliant, independent, and self-determined woman who tried to live life to its fullest. She always strove to pass on her knowledge to others. She will be well remembered and sorely missed. Requiescat in pace.

A Requiem Eucharist will be conducted at 1:00 PM on Sunday, February 11, 2024, at St John's Episcopal Church in Portsmouth by Father Derek Harbin. Interment will follow at Olive Branch Cemetery. On Saturday, February 10, 2024, the family will receive friends from 2:00 - 4:00 PM at Loving Funeral Home in Portsmouth. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the animal charity of your choice.

Cemetery Details

Olive Branch Cemetery

#2 CPL James Williams Ave.
Portsmouth, VA 23701

Previous Events

A Visitation Celebrating Her Life

FEB 10. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Loving Funeral Home Churchland Chapel
3225 Academy Ave
Portsmouth, VA 23703

Service

FEB 11. 1:00 PM (ET)

St John's Episcopal Church
424 Washington St.
Portsmouth
Portsmouth, VA 23704

Tribute Wall

CS

“ Today, I was thinking about Mrs. Buchanan. The Butterfly House will be starting next week, and I remembered our first meeting years ago volunteering there. Over the years, we would meet at BSV meetings and at the botanical gardens. We would reminisce about her husband and my dad, who were medical colleagues and friends. "Tell your mom and aunt to drop by the farm," she would say. Mom and Mrs. Buchanan shared a love for gardening. I knew I hadn't seen her in a while and was sad to come across her obituary.

I never realized that she was an athlete in her younger years, but I always knew she was a remarkable woman. I will miss her, especially during butterfly season. May she fly with the butterflies that rise gracefully to heaven.



Cynthia Su - June 07, 2024 at 08:11 PM

EP

“ An eloquent and beautiful tribute to an inspirational soul who clearly lived life to its fullest! An amazing woman who was blessed with such an incredibly well-loved and well-lived life! God speed, Mrs. B! The world is better for having had you in it and you will be sorely missed.

Emily P - February 09, 2024 at 06:43 PM

PV

“ Wow. So many talents. I had bought a butterfly ring and I couldn't wait to shoe her at a red hats dinner. She loved the ring and of course I gave it to her. She will be missed but always in our hearts
Patricia Vass

patricia vass - February 08, 2024 at 01:32 PM

AB

“ Such a beautiful tribute to a wonderful woman. I am so grateful to have had Shirley in my life. She will be missed.

Anne Bibeau - February 07, 2024 at 02:20 PM