



Mrs. Gayle Hancock Childress

February 5, 1927 - December 3, 2012

Gayle Hancock Childress, 85, avid hiker, gifted storyteller, and committed humanitarian, died peacefully on December 3, 2012. Quick to make friends, she formed diverse and devoted relationships for over 60 years in the Asheville community. Gayle participated in groups including Girl Scouts, Asheville Storytelling Circle, Bridging Differences, and two book clubs: American Association of University Women and Malaprop's. A certified volunteer at the Mediation Center for 12 years and leader of numerous civic organizations, she delighted in learning new things and enjoying people. Gayle was a board member and volunteer at The Rathbun Center Hospitality House.

Born in Springfield, Missouri, she grew up in many places around the country but found her home in North Carolina. A devoted Tarheel and cheerleader for Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice, Gayle met her husband of 48 years, Gran, at UNC. She taught at Durham Academy and Dorminy Dance Studio before they moved to Asheville in 1960 and immersed themselves in the community. They were proud founding members of Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy (SAHC) and worked to protect the mountains they loved. Gran passed away in 1998.

Known as Mimi, Gayle delighted in her family and is survived by her children and their spouses Susan and Randy McCracken of Asheville, Leesa and Todd

Sluder of Mooresville, NC, and Mark and Kate Childress of Crozet, VA, and her grandchildren Morgan Sluder, Mason Sluder, Kristen and husband Micah Wohlford, and Scott Frankel.

A member of Central United Methodist Church for over 50 years, and one of the founders of Stephen Ministry, Gayle served in many capacities in the life of the church. A memorial service will be held at Central UMC on Friday, December 7 at 2:00 p.m. The family will receive friends immediately following the service. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial donation to SAHC, The Rathbun Center, or Central UMC.

Cemetery Details

Lewis Memorial Park

415 Beaverdam Road
Asheville, NC 28804

Previous Events

Service

DEC 7. 2:00 PM (ET)

Central United Methodist Church
27 Church Street
Asheville, NC 28801

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Gayle Hancock Childress*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *So sorry for the loss of your Mom and Grandmother - may you be comforted and uplifted always by Gayle's memory. A fine lady whose company we enjoyed and welcomed - Kirk Johnson & family*

Kirk Johnson - December 19, 2012 at 08:14 AM



“ *We extend our sympathy to Gayle's family. She bravely faced difficulties in life with the same positive vigor she celebrated life and shared in friendships and service. Our paths did not cross too frequently during our retirement years in Asheville, but we remember especially all she was part of in the Central United Methodist Church fellowship. Richard & Sylvia Smyth*

Richard & Sylvia Smyth - December 08, 2012 at 01:14 PM



“ *To the family of Childress,*

I worked with Gayle in Stephen Ministry and loved her deeply. She will always be a great blessing in my thoughts and memories. We were great friends and shared our love with those who needed help.

You all are in my thoughts and prayers for such a loving and giving Mother at this time in your life. Susan Finger



Susan Finger - December 07, 2012 at 11:27 AM

KE

“ Leesa, Susan and Mark, your mom has been such an important part of my life from the very beginning. She and your dad brought my mom and dad together at their wedding -- and their own wedding followed a year later. I wouldn't exist if not for your parents! I remember many sleepovers at your house, with plenty of chocolate chip cookies baking, swinging on the big rope swing, and always having your sweet mom leading the laughter, fun and love. She had the great gift of making everyone feel welcome and part of the family, even up to the last few days. She was one of our Scout leaders, then our dance group leader along with Jean Stockton. As I grew up, she and I loved to talk about good books, theology, our families and the world at large. I loved her curiosity and fascination with life, along with her sense of humor. Even last week she was eager to hear a good joke. Gayle has been so kind to my kids through the years. Graham has known her as "Mimi" for as long as he can remember. He enjoyed going up to the Creeper Trail with y'all as much to spend time with her as with the rest of you! We've shared so many family highlights and griefs together, and I have been privileged to be part of those times. The wedding in May was one of her happiest moments. Gayle Childress lived her earthly life to the fullest, and I know she is enjoying her heavenly life even more. She invested so much of herself in each of you and in her grandchildren -- her values, her faith, the importance of family, her intelligence, her individuality, and her joy. Hold on to those, for that is how she will continue to live on in you. I loved her and am honored that she was my friend. Her huge circle of friends and admirers are mourning her loss, and celebrating her life. We are here for all of you. You're all in my thoughts and prayers. Much love,
Karen Easter

Karen Easter - December 06, 2012 at 11:02 PM

DM

“ Leesa and family, I regret that I cannot be at the funeral tomorrow. I have had such great admiration for your mom (and your dad), stemming from the hours spent up on Griffing Blvd. during high school. Your mom was one of the kindest adults I ever knew during that period of my life. She was always so kind to me. Leesa, I'll never forget taking a road trip somewhere during that period with your mom and dad, and your mom had fallen asleep in the passenger seat of the ole Mercedes. Your dad looked over at us in the back seat, grinning, with that pipe between his teeth, and punched the break pedal. Your mom woke up mad, swatting at him but you could see her grin underneath it all. There was always something fun happening at your house, and I'm thankful for it all.

With love and sympathy, Dan Moore

Dan Moore - December 06, 2012 at 08:10 PM

CA

“ Dear Leesa,

I never had the privilege of meeting your mom, but I sure am impressed with the daughter she raised. My heart goes out to you and your family. I am on my way out of town, but my thoughts, prayers, and virtual hugs are with you.

*With deep sympathy,
Cindi Ackrill*

Cindi Ackrill - December 06, 2012 at 01:40 PM

SP


“ *Gayle was the heart of our "small group" that met each Sunday night at her place on South Lexington. She always loved a good story, and she always loved a good joke! I never remember a time in all the five years that I knew her that she was not totally in love with life, not only her own, but the life of every person she knew. Her beautiful smile will be imprinted in my memory forever, and I will be forever thankful for her friendship.*

*With heartfelt sympathy,
Shirley Parkin*


shirley parkin - December 06, 2012 at 08:17 AM

RM

“ *4 files added to the album New Album Name*

 *Our Beloved Mimi*

 *Age 12 Lake Minnetonka*

 *UNC Grad Class of '49*

 *Always Elegant*

Randy D. McCracken - December 06, 2012 at 06:50 AM

TM

“ Leesa,
I was saddened to learn of Gayle's passing. She was such a wonderful person, full of energy and life. All of us in the Asheville area were blessed to have had your mother in our lives, be it through Central or in her leadership in SAHC. My father held your father in high regard in their business, as a leader and someone I should aspire to be like in the insurance business and my mother always said your mother, as someone else mentioned, was "a kick". I can recall a story or two from the "cherrleading" period too. Great stuff. Your family and those of Childress friends and acquaintences have all been blessed knowing your mother. We will keep you in our thoughts and prayers.

Thomas B. McMahon, LUTCF
"Tommy"



Thomas B. McMahon - December 06, 2012 at 05:09 AM

AB

“ *Gayle was the first person I met when I moved to 12 S Lexington. She was the quintessential southern belle with a saucy kick. I adored her and will miss her dearly.*

Alison Brown

Alison Brown - December 05, 2012 at 07:01 PM

HS

“ *Gayle was one of my patients at Western Carolina Retina and I loved hearing her giggly laughter and sharing stories every time she came in. I was so blessed to have known her. She will surely be missed.*

Helen Shaw

Helen Shaw - December 05, 2012 at 06:56 PM

CJ

“ We have many fond memories of both of your parents "on the mountain." During the blizzard of '93 the neighborhood tramped from house to house to share food and huddle around fireplaces--at that time no generators! Later that spring your mother held a dinner party for the neighbors (your dad was sick during that time and we had all helped out) and gave each of us an "award"--we won "Best Campsite." We will miss her sense of humor, energy, and gentle spirit. May your many happy memories fill the void she leaves behind. Our prayers are with you.

Connie & Ben Jones

Connie Jones - December 05, 2012 at 08:23 AM

EI

“ My thoughts go out to Susan and Mark and the rest of the family. I can just picture your dad with his pipe and your mom telling a story to him right now.

Eleanor Ivey - December 05, 2012 at 07:55 AM

NG

Kristen: Kim, Mary Kay, Ileana, Sabrina and Nancy have you and your family in our thoughts and prayers. We love you and are praying for you. God Bless You.

Nancy Gunn - December 06, 2012 at 11:42 AM