

IN MEMORIAM

Mary Virginia Terry

PASSED PEACEFULLY ON OCTOBER 29, 2022



BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

Mary Virginia Terry died peacefully in her Ortega home on October 29. Her surviving family includes two sisters-in-law as well as several nephews and nieces, one of whom is Jacksonville resident Betsy Cox.

Mary Virginia was born to the Williams family in Quitman, a small city in South Georgia. She grew up there before attending Valdosta State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in the field of social sciences. She had been working as a history and economics teacher when she met C. Herman Terry, who had also grown up in Quitman and who was a graduate of the University of Georgia's School of Commerce. They married soon after, while Herman was working for Commercial Investment Trust Corp. When the company transferred him to its Jacksonville office, the Terrys moved and made this city their home.

As a couple, the Terrys were extraordinary benefactors who made significant contributions to the arts, children, healthcare, and education. In the early 1980s, the C. Herman & Mary Virginia Terry Foundation was established.

In 1988, the Terrys helped launch the initial capital campaign to bring a Ronald McDonald House (RMH) to Jacksonville and, since then, had offered ongoing support. The Terry Family Campus is named in their honor. "Mrs. Terry was a generous and caring woman. She had a tremendous impact on our organization and the entire Jacksonville community. She will be greatly missed, but fondly remembered,"

said David Shaffer, CEO of RMH Charities of Jacksonville.

There are also many buildings that bear the Terry name, not only in Jacksonville, but throughout the Southeast. They include Jacksonville University's Terry Concert Hall, Terry Heart Institute at Wolfson Children's Hospital, Ascension St. Vincent's Mary Virginia Terry Cancer Center, and University of Georgia's C. Herman and Mary Virginia Terry College of Business.

Mary Virginia continued their charitable work long after her husband's 1998 passing. "She was an extraordinary and strong woman to carry on the legacy that she and Herman left in our community and beyond. What a blessing she was," said Jane Lanier, a close friend who had spent many holidays with Mary Virginia.

Mary Virginia contributed to medical research and scholarship funds. She had been a board member for the Salvation Army, the Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, the Women's Guild of the Jacksonville Symphony, and Mayo Clinic Florida Leadership Council among other organizations. She helped make the MOSH 2.0 expansion project possible. The lists are as long as her heart was wide. Wherever she saw great need, she did her best to make a difference.

Mary Virginia regularly contributed to more than 30 organizations. She won the 2002 award for Outstanding Philanthropist from the Florida First Coast Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. She received honorary doctorate degrees in humane letters from Jacksonville University in 2003 and from the University of Georgia in 2009. And yet, Mary Virginia Terry was a humble woman who touched individual lives as deeply as she touched entire establishments.

Sandra Corbett was one of those individuals. "I had the privilege of working for Mrs. Terry for over 36 years, and with each passing year, my admiration and love for her grew. Her philanthropy and generosity extended far beyond those organizations which have been made public. From her I learned so much about life and dealing with its many facets. She was a kind, compassionate, and witty lady and I shall miss her greatly," said Sandra.

In addition to all her charitable activities, Mary Virginia had a recreative side. She loved reading, gardening, and traveling. She annually attended the Georgia-Florida game, and no one will ever know for certain whether she was secretly cheering for the Bulldogs over the Gators, or vice versa. When not at the beach, she enjoyed time in the mountains, even skiing in Lake Tahoe. In 2015, she joined a few other select 'Grand Dammes' of giving, appearing as a cover girl for the Resident Community News Group's premiere issue of Circles Social Datebook & Charity Register. What fun she had! In her presence, the photographers, staff, and publishers did as well. "Mary Virginia was always kind, courteous and gracious; obliging countless requests to help carry our community forward - her giving nature and effort to assist others is a legacy that will impact many generations to come," said Seth Williams, publisher of the news group.

Hardage-Giddens Riverside Funeral Home made arrangements for Mary Virginia. A service and reception were held on November 4 at Ortega United Methodist Church before her remains were returned to Georgia for burial next to her beloved Herman. As a memorial, please consider contributing to the charity of your choice.