



Helen Victoria May

JUL 15, 1949 - DEC 25, 2023



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Helen Victoria (Vicki) Buchanan May was born on July 15, 1949, in Memphis, Tennessee. With her family holding her hands, she passed away in the early morning hours of Christmas Day 2023 in Nashville, Tennessee. She was only 74 years of age.

Vicki is survived by her devoted husband of 36 years, Paul Frederick May. After meeting in Vicksburg, Mississippi through her cousin and his good friend Kimberly Ferris, and having a whirlwind courtship, Vicki and Paul were married on December 12, 1987. Vicki is also survived by her daughter Lila and son-in-law Linus Hall (Nashville, Tennessee), her two cherished granddaughters Lucia Anne Hall and Lillian Ruth Hall (who gave her the affectionate nickname of “Oowah”), as well as Paul’s son, Jeffrey Stuart May, and his wife Erin Sweany (Middletown, Ohio). Vicki is also survived by her beloved older brother George McAfee (Mack) Buchanan III and his wife Judy (Ripley, Mississippi), brother Minor Ferris Buchanan and wife Virginia (Jackson, Mississippi), as well as dear nieces and nephews.

Vicki lived most of her life in Mississippi, raised by her parents Anne Louise Ferris and George McAfee Buchanan Jr. in Holly Springs. As a teen she lived in Warren County with her extended Ferris family (William Reynolds Ferris and Shelby Flowers Ferris) on their farm with numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins, all of whom were an important part of her life. Vicki graduated from All Saints Episcopal School in Vicksburg, where she made many treasured lifelong friends. Vicki went on to earn her undergraduate degree in art from Delta State University, received a certificate of teaching in the Montessori method in London, England, and then obtained a law degree from Mississippi College. As a lawyer she worked as a clerk for the Chief Justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court and practiced law for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Her career in law culminated with her position as an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi, prosecuting federal crimes.

After retirement from her law career, Vicki moved with Paul to Union, Kentucky, where she made many special, lasting friendships which she continued to maintain until her death. Vicki and Paul



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relocated to Nashville, Tennessee, to be closer to their grandchildren. Their home on the Cumberland River and all the wildlife and beauty of living on the river was a source of great joy to her. Paul and Vicki spent years transforming their quaint home in Nashville into an oasis for their entire family to enjoy. Vicki's love of nature was expressed through her lush and forever evolving yard and abundant vegetable gardening with Paul.

Vicki loved making and looking at art. She was especially talented as a ceramicist, calligrapher, and seamstress. She made beautifully intricate beaded jewelry that her friends and family will forever treasure. Vicki loved to gift her beautiful, functional, and wearable creations to her loved ones as a token of her love and appreciation. In early 2019, Vicki and Paul were fortunate enough to spend a month in Venice, Italy, where they immersed themselves in rich art, culture, and history. Vicki loved to travel, but hated to fly, and called her trip to Italy a great life accomplishment. Vicki immensely enjoyed live music, opera, and theater; therefore, living in Music City offered her the opportunity to see some of her favorite musicians, singer songwriters, and performers. She extended invitations of accompaniment to these performances to her daughter and grandchildren, creating some of her granddaughters' most cherished memories.

These memories included trips to Tennessee Performing Arts Center to see Hamilton and seeing John Prine perform live at the Opry.

Vicki was an amazing hostess, organizing many important events for her family and friends. Her keen sense of style and attention to detail made many a wedding, baptism, and birthday party a memorable and festive occasion. While often teased for making people wait for meals and making them so hungry that her food had to taste good, Vicki was an amazing cook. She tried to pass on her recipes, specialties, and cooking tips. Of course, when an attempt to recreate her food never turned out quite the same as when she made it, she was ribbed and affectionately accused of leaving out one ingredient when she gave the recipe, but, regardless, she made the tastiest red beans and rice, spaghetti with homemade turkey meatballs, panko chicken, and butter chicken with rice. On holidays and special occasions, she was sure to make the best custard ever eaten, a dessert she called "Angel Food" and that she always served in crystal champagne flutes. Whenever her granddaughters visited, she'd whip up a gallon of "Jus de Mère"—a mixture of lemonade and grape juice she learned from her grandmother—just for them.

She was strong throughout her life and stayed resilient during all the personal hardships she endured. Her courageous spirit and never-ending love rubbed off on all those around her, as she



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taught others to be stronger, and more accepting of others. Family was incredibly important to Vicki, and she was always present to support them, even if that meant dropping everything to drive to her granddaughter's school to bring her a forgotten item. Vicki attended every one of her granddaughters' school events, performances, or sports games with pride.

Vicki shared with her grandchildren the importance of history, books, words, and reading by taking them to numerous museums, exposing them to the art of storytelling, and giving them a strong sense of justice by participating in many community and policy issues. She taught them how to sew, how to bead and make jewelry, and they would often join her at her ceramics class. She was always interested in the hobbies and media fixations of her two granddaughters and would keep up with all their ever-changing interests to connect with her girls. Vicki liked to express her love for others through acts of service too, making her a kind, giving woman. With her knowledge and experience of the law, she donated many hours and a lot of her energy to these efforts. Vicki wanted her community to be a safer, more welcoming environment for all. A lifelong learner and always trying to stay and be mentally fit and flexible, Vicki recently had been working toward mastering the challenging game of Chinese mahjong. Vicki and Paul would play the game throughout the day, while their goofball cat—a rescue her granddaughters named Marge—pranced around them. Vicki always won.

In lieu of flowers, Vicki's family requests that donations be made in Vicki's honor to the Frist Art Museum (<https://fristartmuseum.org/donate-online/>), The Art Institute of Chicago (<https://sales.artic.edu/donate>) or the Smithsonian's National Museum of Women in the Arts (<https://nmwa.org/support/ways-to-give/>).

Final arrangements for Mrs. May are entrusted to Spring Hill Funeral Home and Cemetery, "Where Nashville Comes to Remember."



Tribute Wall

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Elisabeth Hess posted:

I worked with Vicki in Vicksburg and could always count on a smiling face, encouraging words and upbeat attitude. Sending prayers and thoughts to Paul, Lila and family. Libby Hess

December 30 at 12:45 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Helen by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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