



Mrs. Harriet Bartholow Duncan

October 4, 1919 - March 14, 2015

Harriet Bartholow Duncan died Saturday, March 14th in Cockeysville, MD, after a long and happy life. She was 95. Born October 4, 1919 to Elias Webster and Mildred Booz Bartholow, she grew up with her brother Bradford Bartholow in Baltimore, attended Bryn Mawr School and Goucher College. While in college she met Leroy Edward Duncan, Jr., at that time a medical student at Johns Hopkins. They were married in Baltimore on June 13, 1942. She liked to describe walking at night down Broadway St., even at that time not the safest place, with a pillow under her dress, feigning pregnancy to ward off potential prowlers, as she went to take Dunc, as he was called, his dinner. At that time, being a medical resident at Hopkins, the institution that invented the medical residency, meant, in fact, residing most of ones days at the hospital. Such were the rules that Dunc had to request special permission from Hopkins to marry. After the war the couple first returned to Baltimore and then moved to Nashville, where Dunc was chief resident at Vanderbilt and where Bruce Bartholow Duncan, their first son, was born on April 22, 1949. From there it was back to Baltimore, and on April 10, 1951 the family was completed with the birth of Scott Whitfield Duncan, their second son. As fate would have it, her children called her Harriet instead of Mom. This came from an often retold episode of Bruce being “quarantined” at his grandparents for the first several days after Scott was born, given his untimely exposure to chickenpox. When he came finally home and saw his mother with what must have clearly seemed to him to be his substitute in her arms, he refused to call

her Mommy any more, adopting for his own use what he heard others calling her—"Mrs. Duncan". As that would not do, Mommy decided to accept "Harriet" as an acceptable compromise.

When NIH formed its main campus in Bethesda in 1954, the family moved to Rockville, where they lived for many years. Though certainly apt to gain employment, Harriet, like most women of her day, chose to dedicate her energies to raising the family. It was Harriet who, packed before the trips, unpacked after the trips, prepared the meals, and washed and ironed the clothes and in general held the family together. Later after the kids move on to college Harriet was employed for many years at Walden Books finally quitting when Dunc retired.

She and Dunc were founding members of the Rockville Unitarian Church where for several years Harriet was director of the Church's Sunday School, producing with more enthusiasm than skill piano accompaniments as she led the children's Sunday School hymns. Her son Bruce remembers those days "as a world that moved cyclically through the seasons, apparently without end — school and touch football in the fall; family gatherings over the holidays; sledding, snowmen and basketball in the winter; baseball in the spring and early summer; and then the regular vacations - one week with Harriet's in laws at Nags Head, one week with friends on Edisto Island, and two weeks with her parents on Squirrel Island, Maine. Nags Head was home for the early morning fishing expeditions, swimming, and late afternoon trips to see what the boats had brought in from the Gulfstream. Edisto for waterskiing and slowly pulling crabs in on lines baited with fishheads; and Maine for boating trips, blueberry picking to make cobblers for dessert after lobster and corn on the cob, all this followed by chilly evenings spent sitting before a blazing hearth and then up to bed, snuggling under the comforters."

In the midst of this constancy, one moment stands out. In the early 1960's, Unitarians engaged in the civil rights movement with Harriet giving her full support. Several ministers answered the call of Martin Luther King to come to Selma, one of them Dave Cole, of Rockville's church. When another, Jame Reeb, was killed there, the act seemed to convey a personal call to engagement, and the next thing Bruce remembers is marching beside Harriet in front of the White House carrying a placard inscribed with the words "Send Federal Troops to Alabama".

Dunc worked at the NIH, first as a medical researcher, later as an administrator in the Aging Branch and finally as Acting Director of the then new Aging Institute. It is ironic that at that time he was one of, if not the first at NIH to recommend placing funding into research to understand the causes and biology of dementia.

As the years rolled on, the children grew up and headed off, first to college, then to grad or medical school, and finally into their own distinct worlds of family and professional activities. Bruce married Maria Inês Schmidt, a Brazilian he met at Hopkins while he was a medical student, and raised his son, Michael and daughter Laura in southern Brazil where he has worked as a university professor; Scott married a fellow physics grad student, Pat Davey, also at Hopkins. For many years he worked, to Harriet's joy, within striking distance to Rockville, and she spend many pleasant moments as a grandmother, lightening the load of two working parents by helping with Kelly and Kevin, their two children. Later Scott and his family moved to their present residence in Andover, MA.

Harriet's descendents also include Benjamin Junkes Duncan, Michael and his wife Larissa's 2 year old.

Harriet and Dunc took advantage of this period of lightened responsibilities to travel widely, with yearly winter trips to the Caribbean, and developed a strong bias for St. Barts. However, their tranquility was cut short when Dunc, much to Harriet's sorrow, died of cancer in 1988. After several years of maintaining the family home so that the kids would have a place for periodic family reunions, she tossed in the towel — enough of cutting grass, raking leaves and shoveling snow off the sidewalks — and moved to the Broadmead Retirement Community in Cockeysville in the mid-1990s, where she would spend her remaining years. Personable as she was, and perhaps as one of the few women to maintain her natural brown hair in the otherwise sea of gray, she had a way about her that led to two meaningful relationships while there. The first was with Lorne Guild. Lorne who after flunking his entrance exam to the Naval Academy due to an extra tooth became a lacrosse All-American at Hopkins and gold medal winner in the 1932 Olympics. It was not an easy task for Harriet to ease her way into Lorne's social agenda, as 3 or 4 others were in the running for his companionship. Harriet started off with limited rights — a couple meals, some dances and a few walks around the complex per week. But with the passage of time, she developed an increasingly close and nurturing relationship with Lorne which lasted until his death. Somewhat afterwards, another unattached gentleman, Ed Crawford, moved to Broadmead, and Harriet struck up a relationship with him. Unfortunately, only a few years after they came together, Harriet suffered a small stroke and from then on a progressive dementia. Ed, in a true demonstration of selfless affection stayed with her to the end, visiting her for hours daily. He spent a good part of the

afternoon with her the day she died, leaving only a couple hours before she suddenly lost consciousness this past Saturday night.

Harriet's family and remaining friends will deeply feel the loss. Harriet, with her engaging and warm personality, was easy to make friends and loyal to those she loved.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR **24**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Broadmead Auditorium
13801 York Road
Cockeysville, MD 21030