



## Mrs. Valerie Claire Fauteux Murphy

May 10, 1937 - March 4, 2020

Valerie Claire (Fauteux) Murphy was born in New Bedford Massachusetts on May 10, 1937. Her father was Laurent (“Pete”) Fauteux (1906-1986) and her mother was Mary Anna (“Ann”) Charest (1912-2000). Valerie only had one sibling, Laurier Fauteux, who currently resides in New Bedford with his family.

All four of Valerie’s grandparents were French-Canadian immigrants from Quebec Province who came to find a better life in the bustling cotton mills of New Bedford Massachusetts in the 1890s. Both of Valerie’s parents as most of her extended family worked in the cotton mills or affiliated garment shops and never attended secondary education due to economic reasons. Her father Pete went on to organize the textile workers in his capacity as an agent for the union of Textile Workers of America until 1954. Valerie liked to say that growing up she never had much in terms of material wealth, but did feel always happy and surrounded by family. Both her father and mother were one of ten children in each respective family.

Valerie had a passion for music that lasted her entire life. At an early age, under the influence of her loving uncle Arthur Charest, she began both piano and voice lessons. From the age of 11 years old, she always had a job after school in order to earn the money for her lessons. Despite this, she found time to be a cheerleader in high school and a member of the school chorus. She graduated from New Bedford High School in 1954.

In July 1955, Valerie won the Miss New Bedford pageant. She then went on to the Miss Massachusetts contest that same year and was named runner-up. She attended the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City in 1955 as an alternate. After working at Otis Airforce base for two years and saving up money for college, she auditioned to attend the New England Conservatory of Music. She was accepted and began in September 1956 as a mezzo soprano voice student. She supported herself while in college by working as a performer often in church services and also at a music shop. She graduated with honors in June 1960 with a degree in Vocal Performance and also was elected to Pi Kappa Lambda, the national music honors society. She was the first member of her family to receive a college degree. She received a scholarship to attend graduate school at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia.

During the summers of 1960 and 1961, Valerie was hired by the Santa Fe Opera Company in New Mexico as an apprentice for the four month summer opera season. During the 1960 season, the Company staged six operas including Verdi's *La Traviata* and Bizet's *Carmen*. During the 1961 season, the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky was in residence at the opera company and they performed his opera *The Rake's Progress* and his melodrama *Persephone*. After the close of the 1961 season, Valerie toured with the Santa Fe Opera Company to Germany and Yugoslavia sponsored by the U.S. State Department. Following this tour, she moved to New York City to find professional employment as a singer.

On June 2, 1962 she married Robert "Bob" Ricketson Murphy, also a graduate of New Bedford High School class of 1953. Their first child Graham Murphy was born in Brooklyn in 1963. With her new family, she moved to Athens Greece from 1965-1967 due to her husband Bob's employment with Esso Pappas. Her second child Deirdre (Murphy) Barone was born in Athens in

1966. Another move to London England in 1967 was then followed by the birth of her third child Laura (Murphy) Foster in 1968. The Murphy Family returned to the U.S in 1972 and then moved abroad again in 1977 to Saudi Arabia, again for Bob's employment. Valerie earned her Master of Education degree from the University of Oklahoma in August 1980 while living in Saudi Arabia. She taught music at the Saudi Arabian International School (SAIS) (fondly referred to as "Mrs. Music" by her students) while also teaching private voice and piano lessons and running a busy household. She participated in community theatre and gave community singing performances.

In November 1990 just before Operation "Desert Storm", Valerie and Bob moved to Taipei, Taiwan where they would live for the next 11 years. Valerie taught music at the Taipei American School and also taught many private students. They returned to the U.S in 2001 where she continued to teach piano and voice privately until her retirement in 2013. Valerie lived out the last 7 years of her life living at the Pickersgill Retirement Community in Towson, Maryland. She was very fond of all the staff and residents and always said she felt lucky to be there. Valerie was known throughout Pickersgill as the joyful woman who could always be seen wearing a flower in her hair.

Valerie was bright, warm, resilient and generous of spirit. She worked hard for everything she achieved, never took it for granted and was always grateful. She was quick to laugh and smile and even during difficult times would always look to life's silver linings. Music was her vehicle to achievement and it was also her escape. She loved her family deeply, always gave every bit of herself to them and never expected anything in return. She will be greatly missed.

Valerie was preceded in death by her husband Bob. She is survived by son Graham Murphy (Toni) , daughters Deirdre Barone (Mike) and Laura Foster (John D.) and her brother Laurier Fauteux (Bonnie). She has 9 grandchildren.

Funeral services will be private. She will be buried at the Bourne National Cemetery next to her husband. In lieu of flowers, the family invites you to make a donation in her memory to your favorite charity or one to support arts education.