

*Gwinnett County
Retired Educators
Association*

In Memoriam

2019 - 2020



A Special Memorial Edition of the GCREA Newsline



Remembering

Lois Lane Allen

January 9, 1933-May 17, 2020

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Lois Lane Allen of Lawrenceville, GA. Lois was born in Pittsburg, Kansas to Bertha and Floyd, a Methodist minister. So, Lois along with three brothers and two sisters was involved in church activities as a youth. She had a lot of fun, encouragement and guidance during her early years.

Lois graduated from Southwest Missouri State College in 1955. She had a job lined up in California until she met Woody and fell in love at first sight. They were married three months later. As Woody was in the Army stationed at Fort Smith, Arkansas, they started their life there. When Lois became pregnant with their first child, they moved from California back to Woody's hometown, Atlanta, GA. They have three children and five grandchildren.

Lois has been a lifelong educator having taught elementary, middle, and high school in Arkansas, Missouri, California, and Georgia over a period of thirty-five years. She only took time away to spend with her young children. Lois earned a Master of Education from the University of Georgia in 1986. She was Gwinnett County Middle School Teacher of the Year in 1992-1993. Lois retired in 2000.

Lois was committed to her church, the First United Methodist Church of Lawrenceville, where she faithfully served. She taught Sunday School, and she and Woody were leaders in their adult Sunday School, the Joy Class. Lois was a lay delegate to the NGA United Methodist Conference several times.

Lois valued giving back to her community. She volunteered as chairperson to the Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation Authority. Under her leadership Gwinnett Parks won the 2014 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Parks and Recreation Management. In 2012 Lois was presented with the Community Service Award for her stewardship of the Park System by the Philadelphia Winn Chapter NSDAR of Lawrenceville. In 2018 Lois was honored with Gwinnett's Shining Star Award for her lifetime of outstanding service to the improvement of the quality of life and communities in Gwinnett County. She has a dedicated bench at Tribble Mill Park and a dedicated pavilion at Alexander Park.

We celebrate Lois Lane Allen for her passion for living and her love of family, church, and community. What a servant heart she had!



REMEMBERING

Phyllis Caffey

October 12, 1946 – April 20, 2019

We are here today to celebrate the life and legacy of Phyllis Caffey. When we look at Phyllis' birth and death dates we may be struck by the short amount of time, between those dates.

Phyllis was a teacher, an active member of her Gwinnett County community, and a loyal member of her beloved Briarlake Baptist Church for over thirty years!

At her church, Phyllis was a member of the choir. Many of the choir members were present at her funeral and came up to her casket to lead all present in an a capella version of How Great Thou Art in honor of Phyllis!

Phyllis taught 6th grade for 33 years. She was a Language Arts and Social Studies teacher at Lanier Middle School from 1980 to 2003.

After her retirement Phyllis headed up the Hands Are Not for Hitting puppet shows. These shows were a joint venture between GCREA and the Gwinnett Co. Solicitors Office as an anti-bullying program for grades K-2 in Gwinnett elementary schools. Phyllis headed this project for about eleven years, performing hundreds of shows. These shows meant a great deal to Phyllis and she was recognized for her contributions with the GCPS Retiree of the Year award as a result of her work with and for Hands Are Not for Hitting

As an outstanding educator, Phyllis was asked to join the Georgia Beta Sigma Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, an international honorary sorority for women educators.

Phyllis' personal qualities — warmth, friendliness, acceptance of others and kindness — were evident at meetings, planning sessions, conventions and altruistic functions and helped make her a favorite among our sisters.

Phyllis' radiant glow will live within us, forever. What an exemplary woman and friend she was. She touched our lives in so many ways.

Each of us must participate in an active way, to live life and not be a bystander. The sister we honor was an active participant in life. We remember her with love and affection, with thoughts and prayers. She has touched each of us in a special way. The bonds of sisterhood are strong and deep. The coming of death, can in no way sever these bonds.



Remembering

Harriet Hearn Coffee

March 18, 1916-June 8, 2019

We are celebrating the life and legacy of 103-year-old Harriet Hearn Coffee. Harriet attended Cox College in College Park and Georgia Evening College which is now Georgia State University where she earned a BS in Elementary Education. She then earned her Master's and Sixth Year degrees in Elementary Education at the University of Georgia. Her first teaching job began at 19 in 1937-1938 when she taught a class of 50 combined fourth and fifth grade students in Molena, GA. Her uncle talked her into that job! However, Harriet loved teaching. In 1938 she moved to Atlanta when she married Frank. They raised four children: Sandra, Joel, David, and Jane.

They moved to Gwinnett County living in Dacula and joined Prospect United Methodist Church. Harriet worshiped there for sixty years teaching Sunday School for forty-five of those years. She was a delegate to the annual Methodist Conference for a decade. The cornerstone of her life was her Christian faith.

In 1967 she began a fifteen-year career at Lawrenceville Elementary where she taught second grade until she retired in 1982. She was named Star Teacher by her peers. Harriet remembers teaching the children about writing journals and poetry. She also put a lot of effort into planning the annual Thanksgiving feast and play to which parents were invited. A friend and fellow teacher, Jane Goring, remembers Harriet having a gift of discernment that set the tone for the classroom. She had such a calm presence.

In her retirement Harriet tutored and traveled the world. She took cruises visiting England, Scandinavia, Canada, Italy, and Austria. At 79 Harriet began art lessons, and she painted for ten years with landscapes being her specialty.

Harriet will be remembered for her love of life, her infectious sense of humor, and her encouraging support. She loved spending time with her family. In her later years she lived with her daughter Sandra and enjoyed watching "Little House on the Prairie" and "The Waltons". When she turned 100, she said, "I am proud to be 100. God has been good to me. I have followed his teachings and so he has rewarded me." We celebrate Harriet Coffee for the love and support she gave to her family, friends, and students.



Remembering

Sybil Pate Deacon

August 8, 1936-May 11, 2020

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Sybil Pate Deacon of Lawrenceville, GA. She was born on the Pate Farm in Snellville but spent most of her life in Lawrenceville. She was preceded in death by her husband of 57 years, Dick, who was also a GCREA member. She had one daughter, Leah who is married to Eric Williams and three grandchildren.

Sybil attended Emory at Oxford and graduated from the University of Georgia with a BS in Education. She spent more than thirty years as an elementary education teacher. Sybil retired as a first-grade teacher from Dyer Elementary. She was a member of Delta Kappa Gamma and a life member of GCREA. Sybil attended St. Edward's Episcopal Church.

After retiring Sybil volunteered in the school system and enjoyed researching the history of Snellville. Sybil was a dedicated member of the Hands Are Not For Hitting puppet team for many years. She loved spending time with her family, reading, and singing and playing the piano.

We celebrate Sybil Deacon for the passion she had for teaching and the love she gave to her students.



Remembering

Phil Hall

July 5, 1948-December 29, 2019

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Phil Hall, a beloved teacher and coach, who made the most of his life. Phil was a 1966 graduate of Dacula High School. He and his wife, Diane, an elementary school teacher, live in Dacula. Although Phil and Diane had no children of their own, he had plenty of daughters through his longtime basketball coaching career.

Phil taught and coached at North Gwinnett High School for more than 20 years and spent the last five years of his career at Dacula High School. Phil was inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame at both those high schools. He was an active participant in life and always cared for his players as he was coaching them and followed them afterwards as well. A former player, Jeanette Pierce who followed him as coach at North Gwinnett, commented that he always looked after 'his daughters' once we graduated. Another player, Amanda Heil who later became a coach, spoke of Phil Hall as the most influential person in her life other than her parents. She said he was a great coach, but an even better man. He was tough, but fair. You knew how much he loved God, his wife, and his players. As I became a coach, Coach Hall always sent me a message after big wins or big losses and his message was always the same, "I love you and I'm proud of you." My hope for every athlete is at some point in their athletic career they get an opportunity to have a Coach Hall. What a declaration to the life of Phil Hall!

We celebrate Phil Hall not only for the teacher and coach he was, but for encouraging, loving, and caring man he was.



REMEMBERING

Becky Kenerly

February 19, 1940 – November 15, 2019

We are here today to celebrate the life and legacy of Becky Kenerly. When we look at Becky's birth and death dates we may be struck by the short amount of time, between those dates.

Becky was a teacher, a loving friend and an active member of her Gwinnett County community.

Becky taught middle school art for over 30 years. Her claim to fame was – she was the first art teacher at Sugar Hill Elementary School. Becky was hired by Linda McQuaig's father-in-law. He saw the need for art and music. He figured out how to use his points to at least have a part time art and music teacher. She was at Five Forks Middle and Lanier Middle School.

As an outstanding educator, Becky was asked to join the Georgia Beta Sigma Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, an international honorary sorority for women educators. As a member of ADK, Becky applied her leadership abilities and organizational skills as Beta Sigma's Chapter President from 2008 – 2010.

When asked about what Becky meant to them many people had wonderful things to say about Becky. Here are a few: warm, welcoming, funny, generous with her time and home, smart, loved beautiful things, great company. One person talked about how she gave her toys for her son that originally belonged to Becky's grandson. Another talked about how she was always looking out for people and sharing. Another person talked about how she was generous, opinionated, and great company. Becky had a great love of art and acting. There was a tree last year in the Festival of Trees in memory of Becky. Becky did not seek credit for anything she did.

Let us all strive to live our lives as kindly and energetically as our sister Becky Kenerly



Remembering

Elizabeth Hall Lovin

July 24, 1932-October 18, 2019

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Elizabeth Hall Lovin of Lawrenceville, GA. She was a beloved teacher at Lawrenceville Elementary School for over twenty-three and a half years. She touched so many children with her loving kindness and compassion

Elizabeth was active in her community. She was a member of Lawrenceville First Baptist Church and the Open Bible Sunday School Class. She was a longtime volunteer with Gwinnett Medical Center Auxiliary.

Elizabeth enjoyed fifty-three years with her husband Edwin before his death. She was also preceded in death by her son Mike and she has two surviving children, Jeff and Leandra.

We celebrate Elizabeth who put others first and was always a willing volunteer when she saw a need in her community.



Remembering

Joan Marshall Sewell

November 5, 1936 – March 17, 2020

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Joan Marshall Sewell. She was born in Nashville, Tennessee. She graduated from Cohn High School. In 1961 she graduated from the University of Georgia. She received her Master's in 1971, and in 1981 she received a Specialist degree from Georgia State University.

She was married to Shirley S. "Buddy" Sewell. Together they had four daughters. There are many grandchildren and great grandchildren who rounded out her life.

Joan was a born teacher. She was creative in her thinking and was not one to allow students to pull one over on her. Joan was loved by her colleagues and her students. She was an Instructional Lead Teacher for a while, but her true calling was the classroom. She taught at Mountain Park and Brookwood Elementary Schools. Joan also wrote questions for the county for the testing bank. Those who knew her spoke well of her teaching and leadership.

Once Joan retired, she worked on her writing. Joan authored children's books and wrote articles for publications.

Joan was a founding member of the Beta Sigma chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa. She was much loved by all who knew her. She was a life member of the University of Georgia Alumni Society. Her memberships also included: Georgia Association Retired Educators, Gwinnett County Association Retired Educators, and Health Happiness You. In 1997 Joan received a Community Service Award and the Senior of the Year Award by the Gwinnett Council for Seniors.

We celebrate Joan Sewell for her passion for life and community through teaching and volunteering.



Remembering

Lois Parsons Shirley

September 9, 1931-September 15, 2019

We are celebrating the life and legacy of Lois Parsons Shirley. She was born in Elizabethton, Tennessee and early on showed an interest in learning and teaching. During college she met and married Charles. They dedicated their lives to their Christian beliefs, serving as pastors at small churches in Tennessee and Florida before being appointed Foreign Missionaries to Argentina in 1958. They served in Argentina for over 20 years. Upon their return they settled in Atlanta where Lois earned a Master's and Specialist in Education degree from Georgia State University in 1984. She went on to become a counselor for Gwinnett County Public Schools until her retirement in 1993.

Lois was a woman of strong faith and loved God very much. She was blessed in her spiritual quest by her membership in Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, known for its creative spirit. Lois was graced with four children, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. In 2005 they relocated to Wake Forest, NC. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband Charles with whom she enjoyed sixty-one years of marriage.

Lois Shirley made the most of her life. She lived it courageously and well. She loved reading and most of all having a good conversation with others. Thank you for touching so many lives with your love and faith.

*Memorials written by
Gwinnett County Retired Educators Association*

Memorial Committee 2019/20

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Special Memorial Edition of Newsline

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