



Mildred Keller DeBell

March 16, 1918 - January 20, 2020

Mildred Keller DeBell
(101)

Mildred Keller DeBell (Mama) was born Mildred Lee Keller on March 16, 1918 in Fishers Hill, Shenandoah County, Virginia. On Monday, January 20, 2020, Mildred passed away at The Wellington at Lake Manassas in Gainesville, Virginia, an assisted living facility. She lived at the family homestead "Sunnyside" in Centreville, Virginia for almost 80 years where she witnessed seven generations of DeBells. She moved to Catharpin, Virginia for the past year + living with her two sons and daughter-in-laws. She fell on December 6, 2019 which ultimately led to her passing.

She graduated Strasburg High School as Valedictorian in June of 1934 at the age of sixteen. Went on to Madison College in 1936 after working two years at Keller's Store until sister Rachael Graduated. She graduated Madison College (which is now James Madison University) in 1938 and came to Centreville to teach 1st grade at Centreville Elementary School. Involved in music, rhythm band, wrote operettas and acted in plays. Started going to Saint John's Episcopal Church where she helped raise money to buy their 1st organ in which she played and also directed the choir. She was involved with Saint John's for over seventy five years. Married Stuart Turberville DeBell on August 3, 1940 at Fishers Hill, Virginia where they lived for the first two years of their

marriage. Moved to Sunnyside Farm in 1942 where she lived for over seventy eight plus years. Even though the farm was sold in 1960, the house was moved to where it still stands today in Centreville and was sold in the fall of 2019. She helped with the dairy farming, insurance and bookkeeping services for over 25 years. Owned and operated Newgate Inn along side son Stuart, Jr. and grandson Stuart III from 1970 to 1995. She spent sixteen plus years beside husband Stuart while he was in politics and served on the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors from 1952 to 1968, several years as its Chairman. Mr. DeBell represented the then Centreville District then stretching from Great Falls to Springfield. He worked with Robert E. Simon in the planning and rezoning of the then new town of Reston. Also worked with the Federal Government for the planning and location of the then new Dulles Airport. Mildred was by his side though all of this, hosting the many political dinners at their Sunnyside home and going to the many political and public functions.

Mildred went through WWII with all the farm responsibilities. Involved in many organizations including March of Dimes as its Chairman, Lioness Club and many other civic activities. Charter member of Rocky Run Garden Club which started in 1950; President and member of Fairfax Zonta Club for approximately 40 years; A member of Centreville Historical Society as a Charter member. She spent many hours writing articles, organizing documents and memorabilia and sharing that information for over twenty years at Centreville Day and other local events. Mildred was named the 1st Lady of Centreville on July 6, 1995 during an annual Centreville Day Celebration and was made honorary Lady Fairfax in 2003 by the then Supervisor, Michael Frey, for the Sully District.

Predeceased by husband Stuart Turberville DeBell, Sr.; son Stephen Keller DeBell, Sr.; father Silas Milton Keller and mother Mary Ella Keller (Hinkins); siblings, Dorothy Keller, Lucy Barb, Martha Welch, and Rachel Owings.

Survived by sons Stuart Turberville DeBell, Jr. and John Thomas DeBell; daughter-in-laws, Brenda DeBell, Constance Templeton DeBell and Linda DeBell (widow of deceased son Stephen); nine grandchildren, thirteen great grandchildren, one great, great grandchild; and the many extended family and friends.

She is being cremated and her internment will be at Saint John's Episcopal Church later in the spring. In lieu of flowers Memorial Contributions can be made to Saint John's Episcopal church. Checks can be sent to the church at P.O. Box 2360 Centreville, VA 20122-2360---Memo-Memorial Fund-Mildred Keller DeBell-organ fund.

Tribute Wall

LC

“ *It's been more than 20yrs. Remembering playing pacman with her for hours after the bar closed.*

Laurie cooksley - January 23, 2022 at 10:15 PM



“ I was privileged to visit with Mildred DeBell four or more times in the past twenty years. My mother, Georgia Allen remained in touch with Mildred counting her as a close friend nearly 50 years after we moved away from Centreville back in 1966. My Dad, Red (W.H.), was reassigned from the Pentagon to be Deputy Commander of Tachikawa Airbase during the height of the Viet Nam war. Mom and Dad wrote letters to Mildred and Stuart filled with wonder at the life they lead in Japan; and homesickness for Centreville.

When we moved to Centreville in 1961, we had moved and lived across the country more than once. From Biloxi to DC to Denver to the Philippines. From there to DC again, to Orlando to Anchorage to Montgomery. We kid had never really had a home. One brother had never attended the same school two years in a row. Home was a loving, jostling nest in the midst of wherever we landed. My parents were charismatic people who enjoyed one another and loved to party. Neither had really belonged anywhere but “the Air Force”. They hadn’t had a community and they hadn’t had a church. When they discovered Centerville, and Saint John’s Church, and “the DeBells”, they found a spiritual, familial, social, communal and physical home for the first time since they’d been married. And Sunnyside was at the center, with Mildred and Stuart in the big old house – a gathering spot for the town.

Dad served on the vestry of the Church with Stuart. Mom was on the flower guild with Mildred while I attended choir with her. John and Marge were confirmed at Saint John’s. We all took part in the annual church bazaars. I remember going to Sunnyside for Christmas Eve after Midnight Mass; my brother Bob falling off the tractor Stevie was driving; and driving my ‘38 Buick to Woodson High. John DeBell and I were “seniors” for two years at Woodson in our role as the first graduating class of the new school. I remember Bill Howell, Sr. and Jr., and Mary Howell, my sister’s best friend. Reverend Petersen pastored the church. Work began on Interstate 66 with only one Centreville exit at the time. We took pride living in the historic Centreville, attending a hundred-year-old church, visiting

the battlefield. We belonged.

And Mildred was at the heart of this. A wonderful woman who brought a sunny disposition who made things fun. A wonderful friend to my Mom and Dad who unexpectedly stumbled on a home and history and faith and a great place in the country to raise their kids. Mildred has been like a rock to our family, putting up family members in her wonderful, historic home over the decades. Staying in touch, exchanging letters and poetry. Sharing tears of sadness and joy. A leader, an organizer, a writer, historian, a great storyteller; a teacher. Helpmate to Stuart. Mama to her own kids, but, also to the whole town. Mildred was the backbone of the town and the foundation of our family's attachment to place. My family misses her. My mother, too frail to absorb her loss, remembers her as if she is still delighting her family and friends; still living and guiding the town of Centreville for years to come.

Barbara Allen Ford - March 09, 2020 at 03:21 PM

CD

Barbara, thank you for sharing your families journey with Centreville and DeBell family. I love that Georgia is remembering Mama in her vibrant life that she lived with family, friends and community. She loved the visit with you and Peggy last year and I only wish that she could have had more visitors to help in the lonely days before having her fall. Even with us here, she so missed be able to see, hear and communicate. I also have such fond memories of Red and Georgia having spent time with them when they lived in Orlando. We took walks with them, played bridge and enjoyed lively conversation. Later in another trip south to visit my family, we dropped Mama off to spend time and then picked her up and stayed another day or two. Wonderful people and hosts. Love to your family and hope Georgia is at peace with her memories of Red, family and friends.
Fondly, Connie

Constance DeBell - March 10, 2020 at 11:04 AM

ML

“ *She was a Centreville institution. Extremely grateful to Mrs. DeBell for sharing so much local history with us yanks over the years.*

Michael Lyons - February 27, 2020 at 04:24 PM

CD

“ *Grandma you are now in haven looking down on us and i know you will still be our rock. Looking back on your life i never realized how much you did for our family.*

You always kept things together and we all think you for your love for all of us. I know God will have a new roll for you and i rest assure you will do good. So please know that i will always know that you will be by my side and help me through life.

Until we meet again.

Your loving grandson

Chris

Chris DeBell - February 09, 2020 at 12:27 PM

EM

“ *Emily lit a candle in memory of Mildred Keller DeBell*



Emily - January 26, 2020 at 09:36 AM

EM

“ *Stuart, Krissy, Maddie , Emily and Stuart III,*

*I just saw that grandma passed. I am sooooo sorry for your loss. She was the nicest, sweetest woman I met through Stewart and Krissy while living in Catharpin, Va
You are in my thoughts !!!*

Emily - January 26, 2020 at 09:35 AM

JU

“ *Carl Bennett and I had the best time at the Newgate Inn with Momma, Stuart, Norma and Phil at the helm of the bar. They collectively made everyone who entered the Newgate Inn a special person. Carl so loved when Phil would play "Lonely Tear Drops" by Jackie Wilson every time he entered The Newgate Inn. So many fond memories were made there each and every day! Truly missed.*

Julie - January 23, 2020 at 01:59 PM

LG

“ *I always loved Mildred's joie d'vivre! She was always happy, always had a story and was always at the top of her game when it came to keeping her family's local history alive! It was an honor to call her friend. Such a beautiful smile - she must now be leading a choir of similar historian Angels and looking down with love and devotion - to all who loved her so! My heart & prayers are with her family and friends - who will miss her, indeed.*



Lynne Garvey-Hodge - January 22, 2020 at 11:50 PM

BB

“ *Becky Burum sent a virtual gift in memory of Mildred Keller DeBell*



Becky Burum - January 22, 2020 at 09:27 PM

KD

“ *Kristina DeBell sent a virtual gift in memory of Mildred Keller DeBell*



Kristina DeBell - January 22, 2020 at 09:21 PM

DH

“ *Growing up in Centreville Mama's youngest son, Steve, was one of my best friends. I spent many hours and nights at the DeBell home. Mama DeBell was like a second mom to me. She would scold me if I did wrong just as my mom would. But she would also praise and encourage. Mama had three boys of her own to raise which was a difficult task with Snookie, John and Steve. Each strong willed and very independent. But she also help raise and guide many of the boys in Centreville. There were very few boys in the late 50's and 60's around Centreville that were not family for Mama DeBell.*

My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends of Mama. She was truly one of a kind.

DENNIS HUNSBERGER - January 22, 2020 at 08:21 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mildred Keller DeBell.*



January 22, 2020 at 07:44 PM



“ *I only met her recently, but that encounter left an indelible print on me. Wish we could have had more time. I'm so terribly sorry for your loss.*

Sandy Kirk - January 22, 2020 at 09:53 AM



“ *Ms. DeBell was a near daily patron of the Centreville Post Office in the Newgate Shopping Center. Such a blessing to live such a long, accomplished life.*

Michele Weir - January 22, 2020 at 09:28 AM



“ *Keith Buchanan purchased the Rose Romanesque Bouquet for the family of Mildred Keller DeBell.*



Keith Buchanan - January 22, 2020 at 05:28 AM

KB

“ I knew Mama Debell's grandson Stuart growing up in Centreville - eventually my best man and a life long treasured friend. I'm old enough now to look back and appreciate the few individuals who helped shape my life. I'm not sure how many shifts I worked at the Newgate Inn with Mama, many hundreds I'm sure. When I was 14 she taught me (I thought) how to get the dishes clean. But really she was teaching me how to work hard, be diligent and serve customers. I've carried her life lessons closely and use them every day. Later she taught me how to make all the salads (to this day I jump on my own children for not putting salad on a chilled plate) and prep shrimp cocktails for the evening. Eventually she taught me hard lessons about money, how to check out employees and balance the day's receipts. "Keith, people act differently when the subject is money" - how true is that! As I got better with computers we automated much of the process and programmed the fancy server terminals. Stuart and Snookie taught me the way around the kitchen and bar till I could handle the easy shifts by myself. Mama was looking over my shoulder every minute! Mama DeBell is a big reason I enjoyed any success in life. I could never repay her or her family.

My mother Eula, now 84 years old herself, worked at the Newgate Inn also. Moma was so good to my mother - only later in life did I understand how much she helped my family through a lot of tough times. Eula sends her best wishes to the family. She does not get out a lot these days but will try and make the services.

Mama - may the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

To the family - the Buchanan's will have you in our prayers as you reconcile the absence of a legend (at least in my mind). We love all of you.

Keith Buchanan - January 22, 2020 at 05:15 AM

CD

“ I met Mama when only 14 and working at a local drugstore. She would come in walking so fast and get what she wanted, chatted with the pharmacist and then out the door. Then I went on to work for Snookie at his store age 15 to 17 and interacted with her there. Then soon to marry John and lived with her and Papa the 1st 7 years of our marriage. Now 48 years later, we went though many things together and I will be forever thankful for our relationship and cherish memories. She was a mentor, a force of nature and someone that you always knew where you stood. It's an end of an Era for both the DeBell family and the Keller's too. She always told me I would be the next matriarch. I politely said that she would be the matriarch forever.

Connie DeBell - January 21, 2020 at 09:02 PM

LD

“ Going to miss our chats and our mutual love of fashion!

Leslie DeBell - January 21, 2020 at 08:07 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Mildred Keller DeBell.



January 21, 2020 at 05:55 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Connie DeBell - January 21, 2020 at 03:58 PM