



Debora Lanell McMillan

March 16, 1956 - January 21, 2022

Debora (“Debbie”) Lanell McMillan of Tallahassee, Florida, went to be with the Lord on Friday evening, January 21, 2022. Shortly after she was born March 16, 1956, in Columbia, South Carolina, her father became stationed in Abilene, Texas. It was there her parents, Leslie and Nellie McMillan received Debbie’s diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy, and were told that she would never walk. At three years of age, her father was transferred to Eglin Air Force Base and their family settled in Crestview, FL. Despite Debbie’s physical complications, she was remembered as a joyful, loving child with a determined spirit. She loved to laugh and have fun. The McMillan house was a popular spot for friends, neighbors and cousins, filled with fond memories. They loved to play with Debbie and described her as having a “beautiful, kind, joyful, gentle soul,” who always “held her arms out wide for hugs” and they “could tell her anything.” Debbie fiercely loved her family and to the very end, would remember birthdays and recount fond stories from her childhood.

From a young age, if Debbie put her mind to something, she did it. The Daily News wrote an article about her goals of walking unassisted at age 9, entitled, “She is not disheartened,” as she worked with physical therapists at Eglin Air Force Base. It is evident that Debbie did not let her disability determine her future.

As Debbie entered her teen years, her parents sent her to Tallahassee to

Sunland Center for further assistance with her day to day needs. Not only did she begin her love of the Florida State Seminoles, she made her home in Tallahassee. She spent the next ten or so years learning independent living and job training skills at a variety of homes. She would travel back to Crestview to visit with loved ones and attend special events. In 1980, at the age of 24, Debbie won "Miss Congeniality" at the Miss Florida Wheelchair Pageant. In 1983, she began her ten year career of selling newspapers for the Tallahassee Democrat outside of Publix at the Westwood Shopping Center. Tragically, she lost her mother to cancer in 1985, and it still hurt just as bad 36 years later. In the 90s, Debbie became a part of a program known as "Supported Living." She was able to travel to Orlando and speak at a conference about goals for her life. Shortly after, she purchased her very own home. Debbie wanted the world to know, whether able-bodied or disabled, that "anything is possible. If you put your mind to what you want, go get it." She experienced the joy of marriage and tragedy of divorce. She tasted independence while always valuing the assistance of the many doctors, nurses, and caregivers that surrounded her over the years.

In 2005, Debbie joined with a program called "Specialized Support." This allowed her to live somewhat as an independent adult but have assistance with her physical and medical needs as well as financial management. She also began her thirteen year career at Goodwill Industries at age 50. It was at Goodwill in 2014 that Debbie met the Sprague family. While there was never a legal adoption, the Spragues considered Debbie family and slowly assumed care and responsibility for the last seven years of her life. Debbie was able to travel back to Crestview and visit her father, whom she hadn't seen in years and be with him as he breathed his last in August of 2016. In 2019, Debbie retired from Goodwill and began missing the days she was able to do more for herself. However, she never lost the same spirit she had as a child. She loved to laugh and have fun and be surrounded by family as many chances as she could get. She loved to boast after winning a game of UNO or Bingo and

embraced that “God wasn’t done with her yet.”

In 2020, Debbie permanently moved into Centrepointhe Heath and Rehab Center. That same determined and not disheartened attitude had her standing and transferring even after a fracture in her spine. She proudly “beat Covid” and continually bounced back after various struggles with her body. But Friday night, God called her to leave that body and that wheelchair behind and I’ll bet she held her arms out wide for a great big hug from Jesus. Debbie put her faith in Jesus at a young age and always managed to get connected to a church at the different stages of her life. She became a member of Woodland Hills Church in 2015 and stayed committed through various transitions. She became active in the women’s Bible studies and even served in the children’s ministry. She regularly liked to invite people to church and introduce them to her pastor.

While Debbie may have had a diagnosis and a disability to battle with, she trusted God had a plan for her life. She viewed obstacles as opportunities and “if she didn’t feel like you were helping her quick enough, she would do it herself,” (which sometimes got her into trouble). She was thoughtful of others and loved to give gifts. She often just called to say “I love you.” We are so thankful for the full life God allowed her to live. Debbie’s life had value and significance. She experienced swimming, the beach, airplane rides, and dancing; winning, losing, playing, and sharing; giving, getting, struggling, and overcoming. Most importantly, she was able to love and be loved, forgive and be forgiven, and she taught us all what true friendship and family looks like through good times and bad. She trusted the Lord with her life, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28) Debbie, you will be missed and forever cherished in so many hearts.

Please join us for a memorial service and celebration of life at Bevis Funeral Home of Tallahassee on Saturday, January 29, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. The service will also be available to watch via livestream for friends and family outside of Tallahassee: www.bevisfh.com/obituaries/permalink/10346000/LTWWebcast

A graveside service and burial will be held in Crestview, Florida on Sunday, January 30, 2022 at 2:00 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to: www.gofundme.com/f/saying-goodbye-to-miss-debbie/donate

Breanna Green of Bevis Funeral Home is assisting the family with their arrangements. (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com)

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JAN **29**. 5:00 PM (ET)

Bevis Funeral Home & Crematory
200 John Knox Rd
Tallahassee, FL 32303
(850) 385-2193

Tribute Wall



“ *Bevis Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Debora Lanell McMillan*



Bevis Funeral Home - January 26, 2022 at 09:42 AM



Thank you Jenni and family for sharing precious memories of Debbie. Especially for loving her as your very own. May Jesus Bless your family abundantly.

Maxie Mullis - January 29, 2022 at 06:28 PM

FV

“Debbie and I were besties in Crestview when we were kids. We attended Live Oak Baptist Church. I remember when Debbie made her profession of faith and baptismal service were scheduled. There was a discussion about Debbie being baptized by submersion. There was concern about her being able to stand, etc. Debbie was adamant, or should I say defiant? She made it clear to her parents and the pastor that she was going to be baptized in the church baptistery! My dad and her dad were both deacons, so, when the Sunday rolled around, there was Miss Debbie beaming as they gently lifted her down the steps and kept her steady. As the pastor spoke to her about her decision and her public profession of faith Debbie was smiling and almost shouting her answers. When he lowered her gently into that water there was a collective “Amen” from the congregation. Debbie was righted and almost jumped from their grasp with excitement! Her joy and faith was abundantly clear and that joy was contagious. After Debbie left us for Sunland, both myself and our friend moved to different parts of the country. We went to school, had careers and children. After reconnecting a few years ago, Michelle and I began looking for Debbie. By sheer luck, we traced her to Tallahassee. We planned a trip to reconnect with her but Covid hit, and we both suffered losses of a parent and I lost my father in law who I cared for. I regret not having one more Debbie hug. As teens we would have lengthy phone calls (in the days of party lines..lol) many a time we were asked to “relinquish” the line! Thank you for taking care of her. God sent you to her, and her to you just when the time was right. Rest in sweet peace Debbie Do. We will meet again!

Faye Vines - November 30, 2024 at 01:36 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Debora Lanell McMillan.



January 28, 2022 at 08:29 AM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jeni Sprague - January 27, 2022 at 02:57 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jeni Sprague - January 27, 2022 at 02:56 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jeni Sprague - January 27, 2022 at 02:52 PM

JS

“ *She loved cotton candy and her FSU Seminoles!*



Jeni Sprague - January 27, 2022 at 07:57 AM

JS

I'm so thankful we took her to a game this year!

Jeni Sprague - January 27, 2022 at 07:57 AM

JE

“ *3 files added to the album fun memories*



Jeni - January 26, 2022 at 11:15 PM

MA

“ *Maxie sent a virtual gift in memory of Debora Lanell McMillan*



Maxie - January 26, 2022 at 04:06 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Debora Lanell McMillan.* ”



January 26, 2022 at 12:53 PM