



Mary Ella McCredie Gifford

October 21, 1910 - August 3, 2014

Mary Ella McCredie Gifford passed away on Sunday, August 3, 2014 at the age of 103, just two months shy of her 104th birthday. Mary Ella was born on October 21, 1910 to Maude Elizabeth and Norman Aubrey McCredie in Micanopy, Florida. She was the oldest surviving member of a pioneer family that settled Alachua County. Following the untimely death of her father, the family moved to Spartanburg, South Carolina where the maternal Davis family had deep roots. Mary Ella graduated from Spartanburg High School and remained there for college. She was the oldest alumna of Converse College, having graduated in 1933 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. She was recently honored by Converse with membership in the 1889 Society, as the longest continuous donor to the school (81 years). She was previously inducted into Converse's Golden Club. Growing up in a matriarchal family gave Mary Ella the tenacity to accomplish whatever goals she set. Always an academician, she was also a tireless advocate for those in need, especially children. Her love of all children led her to pursue careers in social work and teaching. She completed her graduate degree in Social Case Work and Policy at the College of William and Mary and continued her love of learning with additional coursework at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, the University of Richmond, the University of South Carolina and Rutgers University. She was a Charter Member of ACSW and NASW. Mary Ella's social work career spanned the Greensboro Juvenile Court System, the Baptist Orphanage of North Carolina, the Family Welfare Association,

Traveler's Aid, Middlesex General Hospital and Clark County Social Services. Children and their well being was always her focus. She also enjoyed her years as an elementary school teacher and with the K through 12 Hospital Homebound Program. Throughout her life Mary Ella was bestowed many honors and awards, always quietly discounting their importance. However, one honor that meant a lot to her was "Volunteer of the Year" at North Ward Elementary School in Clearwater, Florida, where she volunteered until age 90. She was also bestowed the Pinellas County Points of Light "Outstanding citizen" award.

In 1943 Mary Ella married the love of her life, Christopher Linzee Gifford, who preceded her in death in 2006, after 63 years of marriage. World War II and the Korean War led to a military life followed by 30 years of retirement in Clearwater Beach. Mary Ella was a woman of deep faith and an active member of the Chapel by the Sea, where she was a Deacon and circle leader. Over the years Mary Ella enjoyed daily walks on the beach, shelling, bird watching, making new friends and praising God for the beauty of the sea. She and Chris loved to read, speak German, sing, "discuss" current events and most of all, laugh. Together they cared for frail neighbors and friends as their health declined. Travel, playing the piano, tending her violets, bridge with friends and tennis were times of enjoyment in her earlier years.

At the age of 90 Mary Ella and Chris moved to Tallahassee to be near their only child, Susan Gifford Van Leuven and devoted son-in-law, David. She is also survived by her beloved grandchildren and five great grandchildren: David Tyler Van Leuven (Brandi) and daughters Mary Ella, Mallory Elizabeth and Anna Shaw Van Leuven; Colby Van Leuven Lindsay (Sean) and their children Christopher Hunter and Mary Davis Lindsay; and Mary Linzee Van Leuven Branham (Freddy), all of Tallahassee. A loving nephew, Roger Waring McCredie (Lynda) of Ashville, North Carolina, also survives her. No one was more devoted to their family than Mary Ella. She never missed a grandchild's special event and was available whenever needed. She loved her daughter and son-in-law and their friends and families. She was a truly beautiful person,

both inside and out. Always gracious, Mary Ella's kindness, generosity and inability to see faults in others served her well to the end of her days. She lived happily at Sterling House for over 10 years, endearing herself to staff, visitors and other residents.

The family would like to express heartfelt thanks to the Sterling House care staff and the loving angels from Big Bend Hospice for the care Mary Ella received during her final days. In lieu of flowers, donations in Mary Ella's memory may be made to Big Bend Hospice, 1723 Mahan Center Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32308, or the charity of your choice.

A graveside service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Friday, August 8, 2014 at Roselawn Cemetery. Friends are invited to the Van Leuven home following the service, to celebrate Mary Ella's life.

Rocky Bevis of Bevis Funeral Home (www.bevisfh.com, 850/385-2193) is assisting the family with arrangements.

Tribute Wall



“ *Serene Reflections Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Ella McCredie Gifford.* ”



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