



Dr. Virginia Ann Vail

May 4, 1945 - October 19, 2024

Virginia, known as “Ginny,” passed away on October 19, 2024. Born on May 4, 1945, she grew up in Scotia, New York, along the Mohawk River and started her college career at Hartwick College. She initially majored in Spanish but quickly became captivated with biology and changed her major to Biological Sciences. In 1967, she was awarded a B. A. in Biological Sciences. In the 1970's she moved to Florida and received her Masters of Science from The Florida State University in 1971. Her focus was on growth and reproduction of the “grunt” earthworm in the Apalachicola National Forest. She continued on at Florida State where she obtained her Ph.D. in 1975 for her studies on the comparative brood production in three species of live-bearing freshwater snails.

Dr. Vail began her professional career at Tall Timbers Research Station in 1975 where she was on the research staff examining freshwater snails, land snails and earthworms related to their comparative systematics, morphologies, life histories, and fire ecology.

She moved on to state government in 1980 as an Environmental Specialist III with the Florida Department of Natural Resources, Division of State Lands. While with the Division of State lands, she performed on-site assessments of properties proposed for purchase under the Conservation and Recreation Lands Acquisition program. Her career in the marine arena began in 1982 when she moved over the Division of Recreation and Parks as an Environmental Administrator responsible for administering and operating Florida's National Marine Sanctuaries and National Estuarine Reserves program. In 1986, she moved to the Division of Marine Resources as marine Federal Aid Coordinator, and supervisor of the Artificial Reef Program.

In 1994 the Florida Department of Natural Resources was subsumed by three other agencies. In 1999 another reorganization moved Marine Resource responsibilities to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission where she became Chief of the Bureau of Fisheries Management and Assistance Services. In that capacity she provided management and administrative oversight of commercial and recreational fisheries.

Fisheries management for the Gulf of Mexico is heavily influenced by activities of an interstate fisheries compact, the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. This body has contributed to the betterment of the fisheries of the Gulf of Mexico through significant biological, industrial, legislative, enforcement, or administrative activities. Dr. Vail was involved in Commission Activities for over 23 years, working on its various subcommittees and committees as well as a valued

Commissioner from 1991 through 2010 and served three times as Chairman.

In 2011, Dr. Vail received the Commission's Charles H. Lyles Award. This honor is presented to an individual, agency, or organization active in marine fisheries whose careers and contributions to Gulf fisheries are worthy to be labeled "fishery giants." Membership in this elite club is composed of Congressmen, scientists, administrators, enforcement, businessmen, and fishermen from both recreational and commercial industries. This was a fitting testimony to her life's work.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Harold and Dorothy Vail. She is survived by a cousin, Jacklynn Galusha, and many friends and former colleagues from Tall Timbers and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. She will be interred beside her parents in Broadalbin–Mayfield Rural Cemetery (Fulton County, New York) in the Vail Family Plot.

She was a friend for over 50 years, and was, indeed, part of the family of Susan Drake and husband Charles Futch and Godmother to children Bonnie Futch (Sean Southwell) and Jennifer Futch (Tristan Christiansen). For many years she, Susan and Charles had dinner together every Thursday with each taking a turn at trying out recipes. The family shared many birthdays, holidays, and unplanned get togethers. In recent years, Ginny and Susan traveled to Canada, Colorado, Mount St. Helens (Washington), Utah, and were planning their next adventure when she became ill.

They give great thanks to Angela Johnson of A & W Companion Services for extraordinary service in

caring for her. Too, we recognize the Gables Assisted Living Facility for outstanding care. And finally, Big Bend Hospice House provided compassionate care during her last days.

In lieu of flowers, please consider contributing to the Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare Foundation Animal Therapy Program, or St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, or Big Bend Hospice House.

There are no plans for a memorial service at this time.

Dayne Parker of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or www.bevsifh.com) is assisting the family with their arrangements.