



## Virginia Huckabee Specht

September 13, 1914 - October 15, 2019

Virginia Ross Huckabee Specht, 105, Topeka, Kansas, passed away peacefully Tuesday, October 15, 2019, at Brookside Senior Living following 10 years of challenges from dementia. We are so grateful for the loving and experienced care she received and the staff friends who were so attentive and loving for the five years she lived there, especially Reisha and Erin.

Virginia was born September 13, 1914, in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, the oldest of five children born to George Ross and Ethel C. Williams Gantt. Her younger siblings were Frederick "Ross" (Bernadine), William (Doris), Robert (Ruth) and surviving sister Barbara (Harry Pippin) and her children, Diane, Mike, Rob, Trudy, Melody and Steve of the Denver area.

Virginia went to Topeka to grow up with adoptive parents, Fred and Mallie Ross. She began school at the Sisters of Bethany Episcopal Girls School, Topeka, transferred to Crane Jr. High when Bethany closed (1928) and attended Topeka High School. As an accomplished vocalist, she was offered a position with the Chicago Lyric Opera. During the 1930s, she frequently performed as a pianist in Topeka, including local radio broadcasts from the Jayhawk Hotel. Virginia began the Shawnee County Red Cross Water Safety Program for Children and gave swimming lessons at the YWCA. Additionally, Virginia helped Beta Sigma Phi founder, Walter Ross, establish the first Topeka Chapter where she made lifelong friends.

By 1943 Virginia was organizing activities for servicemen through the Forbes Field USO. At one social, her box lunch was raffled and “won” by Master Sgt. Grattan “Grat” Huckabee of Birmingham, Alabama. They dated for a year, were married in 1944 and had four children. With a love of traveling, Grat and Virginia traveled most of the 48 states with their children. Although Virginia hadn’t known how to boil water at the time of her marriage, she learned, and no one ever complained about her blueberry pies or great southern breakfasts. Grat sold his marketing business to manage the Chesterfield Hotel (Virginia’s family business) from 1959 until his death in 1965. By 1967, Virginia began her only paid job, when she became a realtor with the John Robb Co. in Topeka. It fit her love of working hard and making new friends so well that she became the first woman realtor in Topeka to join the Million Dollar Club for total yearly sales.

Virginia served most of her adult life as a volunteer and active board member/officer of Stormont-Vail Hospital Auxiliary Group 1. She served on the Board of Trustees of Baker University and was a life-long member of Grace Cathedral, Topeka. In 1999, Virginia was awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship by the Rotary Club of Rockford, Illinois, in honor of her many years of Service Above Self.

At age 62, Virginia married Frank Specht and joined his family of four grown children, Susan, Judy (Jack), Jeannie (Bob) and Ted (Cindy) and their families. She always felt they were like her own children and loved being included in their family holidays and activities. For 10 years, Virginia and Frank enjoyed American Legion friends and traveling throughout Canada, Mexico and Europe. Frank died in 1987 and Virginia remained active with family and friends until age 100, when her memory began to interfere. She didn’t always remember who she was talking with, but she definitely enjoyed the conversations.

Her love of family and friends, her devotion to her children's activities, interests and education, and her determination to be honest and do the best she could made her a great role model and a friend to many.

Virginia is survived by her children, George (Diane) Andersen, Hillsboro, Oregon, Elise Cadigan (Glenn) Koski, Rockford, Illinois, Greg (Patty) Huckabee, Arvada, Colorado and George (Susan) Huckabee, Topeka, Kansas. Grandchildren include, Jenni (Andrew) Tiemann, Lake Oswego, Oregon, Kent (Jenny) Lindstrom, St. Louis, Missouri, Matt Cadigan, Chicago, Illinois, Andrew Koski, Mesa Arizona, Travis (Mandy) Huckabee, Denver, Colorado, Christopher (Andrea) Huckabee, Kansas City, Kansas and David (Katie) Huckabee, Topeka. Six great-grandchildren, Matthew and Alyssa, Blake and Zach and Clark and Grant will hear many stories about their great-grandmother.

Virginia's memorial service will be Monday, October 28, 11 a.m. at Grace Episcopal Cathedral. Inurnment will be later at Mount Calvary Cemetery, Topeka.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Topeka South Rotary Club (toward their community service project, Day Care Center for Survivors of Human Trafficking), sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka KS 66614.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

OCT **28**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Grace Episcopal Cathedral  
701 SW 8th Avenue  
Topeka, KS 66603

# Tribute Wall



“ *Virginia Huckabee Specht*

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ *Although I never had the opportunity to meet Virginia, the stories of her amazing life have been told to me by her daughter. It is clear to me that Virginia's love of giving back, strength and perseverance was passed on to her daughter, who continues to carry her mother's torch and inspires so many.*



VCM

Victoria McKenzie - October 27, 2019 at 05:28 AM