



Virginia Mary Benjamin

March 23, 1928 - April 30, 2021

Our mother was born to John and Ethel (Mosier) VanSlyke March 23, 1928 in Tonasket, WA, near the Wauconda Valley where her parents homesteaded in 1902. Mom grew up behind the Wauconda Store and post office, where her dad was shopkeeper and postmaster. Virginia was the youngest of 11 brothers and sisters, her parents died shortly after she entered adulthood. Virginia had many adventures as a teenager, including: living with her oldest sister Hazel Mercer in Seattle during World War II, and hitchhiking to Kentucky and back to escort our father after he was released from the Army after the War. Mom had a lifelong love for animals that began with owning and caring for horses, which she rode bareback as a teenager.

After a brief marriage to Charles Merrill, with whom she had a daughter who lived only a few days, Virginia reunited with her first true love, Billy Joe Willis. Mom and Dad's romance lasted for nearly 30 years. They brought five children into the world before separating in 1969. In 1970, Virginia and her three youngest children moved to Ferndale, WA where she married Howard Benjamin in 1972.

Mom had a full and varied work life. She owned a tavern in Riverside, WA, and worked for many years as a waitress, including at the Horseshoe Caf  in Bellingham. One special childhood memory is when Mom worked at the Tonka Toy factory in Minnesota. Virginia was primarily known as the "Avon Lady" for 50+ years. She volunteered for more than 20 years at the Ferndale Senior Center, earning her several awards and praises as "Queen of the Front Desk". Mom was a member of The United Church of Ferndale where she was baptized.

She had a great love for her five children...her only wish was a last family reunion with all five of us which took place on her 90th birthday. She enjoyed her flower gardens, her numerous cats (most recent Thumper), a dog named Benji, and golfing with Howard. As she became home ridden, Mom's focus turned to the many birds she fed outside her windows and her hanging flower baskets!

Mom is survived by four children: Billy Joe Willis Jr, Riverside; Mary Howell (Robert) Forks; Charles "Chuck" Willis (Janice) Ferndale; and Craig Willis (Kai), Eugene, OR, and stepchildren Melodi Miles, Spokane; and Robert Benjamin (Goldie), Aurora, OR. She was preceded in death by her husbands and her oldest son Arlie E. "Pete" Willis (Zae), Yakima.

Virginia has numerous nieces and nephews, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-greats!

Our mom passed peacefully on April 30, 2021 in her home of 50 years with her children by her side.

You never said 'I'm leaving'

You never said 'goodbye'

You were gone before we knew it

And only God knows why

In life we loved you dearly

In death we love you still

In our heart we hold a place that only you can fill

It breaks our heart to lose you

But you didn't go 'alone'

In lieu of flowers, Mom's special request was donations be directed to Ferndale Senior Center or Whatcom Hospice.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Dear Aunt Virginia, may you Rest In Peace*

Sharron (Willis) - May 14, 2021 at 12:00 AM