



Virginia Lee Muller Shapard

February 19, 1936 - July 26, 2025

Virginia Lee Muller Shapard, known to many as Ginger, passed away on Saturday, July 26, at her home in Griffin, Georgia. It was great comfort that Ginger was able to come home after several weeks of medical care. She felt all the love that her family, friends, and caretakers gave in her final years and days. Ginger was generous, quick-witted, kind, full of enthusiasm, and devoted to her family. She was a positive force in the lives of many people who knew her.

Ginger was born Feb. 19, 1936, in Manhattan, N.Y., to Joseph Muller and Helen Church Muller. Her mother was originally from Norfolk, Va., and attended college in New York, while Ginger's father and family were Jewish immigrants from Hungary. Her family moved to Queens in the 1940s, settling in Bayside after her parents divorced, growing up there with her sister, mother, and grandmother. Her grandmother, Effie Shane Church, was especially important as a source of love and encouragement for Ginger and her sister, Marilyn.

Bayside High School was a top-ranked public school, and Ginger thrived there; as her fellow seniors described her in 1953, "Brains and beauty combined as one, to top it off she's lots of fun." Ginger loved to tell stories about her teachers and experiences at Bayside High, and her time there and the subsequent four years at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Va., were the foundation for her deep commitment to education. At Randolph-Macon, Ginger majored in biology, with a psychology minor. She

was a member of Phi Mu sorority and participated in many clubs and activities, including playing upright bass in a band. Another favorite activity was defying the school's dress code, at least in early-morning lab classes for her biology major; Ginger's tactic was to get up at the last minute, throw on her long coat over her nightgown, add a pearl necklace, and hustle to the lab. In Ginger's junior year, her roommate was Martha Roddenbery, a native of Cairo, Ga., who happened to be dating another Georgian, Billy Shapard from Griffin. Billy and a friend had planned a visit to the college for a double-date with Martha and Ginger, but when the friend could not make it, Billy invited his older brother, Bobby, who had recently left the U.S. Air Force to work in the family textile business. Ginger had not met the brothers before, and as soon as she spotted Bobby at the train station, she thought, "Please let him be my date." Later that year, Bobby invited her home to Griffin for Thanksgiving, and when he asked on bended knee if Ginger would marry him, her response, according to family lore, was to say, "I think I might." She did – they were married a few weeks after she graduated in 1957 and were together for nearly sixty-two years until Bobby's passing in 2019.

The couple lived first on McLaurin St., and Ginger spent several years as a caseworker for the agency known today as Family and Children Services, focusing on foster-care and adoption. She was known in part for zipping around town in a small sports car, with her tall husband by her side. When she and Bobby were not having luck in conceiving, they adopted Virginia in 1965, Rob two years later, and Christy two years after that. Once the pressure was off, lo and behold, Lloyd arrived the old-fashioned way in 1971. By that time, they were finishing construction of their new home and farm on Jackson Road, using many old timbers and other materials they salvaged from historic buildings around the state, such as the first Atlanta Constitution Building (built in 1884), the former Griffin Female College in Griffin, the original Wesleyan College building in Macon, and heart-pine church pews from St. George's Episcopal Church.

Ginger also became active in community groups, including the Utility Club and

the bi-racial committee formed at St. George's Church that worked for peaceful desegregation in the late 1960s. Seeing a critical need for a new library in Griffin, Ginger and other supporters led a successful library-bond referendum in 1972, and she chaired the committee that built the new Flint River Regional Library. As she fondly remembered in an oral history, "I gave speeches in every nook and cranny, every little country church, every service club, every place." Building on this experience, she ran successfully for the Georgia State Senate in 1974, the first woman elected for a full term to the senate; she was re-elected two years later. Ginger focused as a legislator on issues including public education, mental health, adoption, and reforms to the senate's legislative process. "I worked hard at it," Ginger said, looking back. "I did my very best and felt that I maintained my integrity."

In 1978, she ran for Congress and won the Democratic nomination, before losing in the general election. To pay off her campaign debt, Ginger worked for Metropolitan Life for several years, applying every check she earned as an agent to the debt. Her children and family were proud of her work in public life; with her intelligence, determination, and courage, she set a powerful example for them. She always had a big heart for people who were struggling and wanted more opportunities to improve their lives through education and work. Ginger also loved Randolph-Macon Woman's College and was a passionate advocate for the school throughout her life. She served on the Board of Trustees from 1977 to 1998, including time as board chair, leader of a presidential-search committee, and a skilled fundraiser; she received the college's Alumni Achievement Award in 2006. Ginger also loved France and its culture; she knew a little French from college, but she returned to studying the language later in life and became fluent. In retirement, she and Bobby spent a great deal of time living and exploring in France, making cherished friends there and hosting their family and friends from home on long visits. Ginger was preceded in death by husband Robert P. "Bobby" Shapard III; sister, Marilyn Spies; and niece, Cathy Lewis. She is survived by children

Lloyd R. Shapard (Rosa); Christy S. Sherman (Jay); Rob Shapard (Sarah), and Virginia S. Church (Stacey); grandchildren Katherine Wade (Austin), Christina Martin, Ella and Samantha Shapard, Alexandra and Jacob Sherman, and Holland Shapard; great-granddaughter Sadie Fay Wade; and many beloved members of her extended family.

A funeral service will be held Aug. 9 at 11:00 am at St. George's Episcopal Church in Griffin, and all are invited to gather after the service at Ginger's home. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to St. George's Church, or the Alzheimer's Association.

For online condolences please visit www.haistenmcculloughfuneralhome.com.

Haisten McCullough Funeral Home, 1155 Everee Inn Road, Griffin is in charge of arrangements.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

AUG 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. George's Episcopal Church
132 N. 10th St.
Griffin, GA 30223

Tribute Wall



“ *Judy Sutton lit a candle in memory of Virginia Lee Muller Shapard*



Judy Sutton - August 08, 2025 at 05:55 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Virginia Lee Muller Shapard.*



August 08, 2025 at 11:46 AM

LI

“ For Virginia & Stacey, along with the entire Shapard family~

We offer our sincere condolences.

A Mom holds the deepest place in one's heart.

She carries, she nurtures, she delivers in every sense of the word.

*May our God, now carry you all in his hands, bringing comfort,
peace & hope †*

With blessed thoughts & prayers,

*Your classmates,
Liz & Marty King*

Liz - August 04, 2025 at 09:08 PM

PT

“ *Virginia was kind, gentile, capable, and dedicated to her community as well as Georgia and the nation. She was supportive and appreciative of me as a teacher of her children. Serving in the Legislature, she shared her faith in public education and worked toward improvements.*

To her loved and cherished children, please bear in mind: Those we love don't go away; they walk beside us in our hearts and memories.

Peggy Thrasher - August 04, 2025 at 08:54 AM