



Julia Swann Pittman

March 15, 1943 - Dec. 25, 2024

Julia Swann Pittman, 81, of Morganton, NC passed away on Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25, 2024. She was born on March 15, 1943 in Marion, NC to Norman "Lee" Swann and Bessie Knight Swann and was raised in her beloved, thriving little town of Spruce Pine, NC. Julia was a retired teacher with over 50 years in the classroom and a member of the First United Methodist Church of Morganton.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by a sister, Amanda Phelps; brother, Marion Swann.

She is survived by her sister, Bettie Gunter; her sons, Chris Pittman and Tim Pittman (Angie); grandchildren, Michaela Yost (Alex), Sophia Pittman, Lillie Miller (Logan) and Troy Martin; great-grandchildren, Xander and Danielle Ruth.

As a child she loved reading books, taking the nearby Toe River walking bridge with her family to the Carolina Theater on Lower Street, and watching classic Hollywood movies in the Carolina Theater. She would eagerly come home to dance up and down the front steps of the house on Tappan Street. reenacting the scenes she had just

seen on the screen. She loved playing football with her older brother and her cousins Jimmy and Jerry Young. Julia cherished her family, teachers, and classmates.

At a young age, creative teachers recognized her and some of her classmates' talents and took time to teach them how to dance, sing, and perform. By the time she was in high school, Julia would go on to entertain at school functions, in talent contests, at various civic events, and on the radio, often singing with her good friends and cousins Kathy and Beth Bartlett. She loved involving her classmates and putting together skits that would fill the room with laughter. At Harris High, she was drum major and started on a basketball team that won a conference championship. She looked forward to the Class of 1961 reunions and reminiscing about the wonderful and funny times they all had growing up together in Spruce Pine.

She loved going to church, particularly growing up in Spruce Pine Methodist and participating in Methodist Youth Fellowship. She remembers their excursions on the Blue Ridge Parkway and singing old hymns together and hearing it echo through the hills. She sang for many years in the FUMC Choir and also in the Morganton Combined Choir. She would also help direct several plays in the FUMC fellowship hall.

Julia graduated Magna Cum Laude at Western Carolina College, majoring in English and French. Not only did she dedicate herself in the classroom, but she quickly connected with other teachers who shared her love of music, dance, and theater. Those fellow directors became some of her closest friends. While she would occasionally perform, she truly enjoyed directing and choreographing people of all ages. Earlier in her career, she was able to blend being a caring mother with being a dedicated teacher, club sponsor, and show choreographer or director. She would often bring her two sons to rehearsals and performances, and they learned what it takes to put together a show. Both sons grew up to act, sing, and direct shows themselves, sharing the love of and respect for theater with others. Aside from watching movies, Julia, Chris, and Tim most enjoyed watching basketball and football games together.

She believed deeply in enriching students' lives by helping high school students connect with literature. She would always tell interesting background information about the authors and give the history behind the story. She wanted students to have

about the authors and give the history behind the story. She wanted students to have the life skill of expressing themselves on the written page and speaking in front of people. Grading papers, particularly writing, was a labor of love. She carefully read each paper, looking for ways to encourage each student while suggesting ways to clarify the student-writer's intended meaning. She believed in instilling a sense of responsibility, being fair, and providing opportunities for improving one's grade if the struggling student was showing effort to learn. She always valued opportunities to teach, listen, learn, laugh, or rejoice in being with good people.

A funeral service will begin at 10:30 am on Saturday, January 4, 2025 at First United Methodist Church. The family will receive friends following the service. Burial will be at 2 pm on Saturday at Spruce Pine Memorial Cemetery with Rev. Holly McKim officiating.

Memorial contributions may be made to St Jude Children's Research Hospital or the Shriners Children's Hospitals.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

Mrs. Pittman was my all-time favorite teacher. I was her student assistant my senior year, after having been in her 11th grade English class. I absolutely loved her and am so sad to learn she passed away. I send my best wishes to her family.

–Amelia (Whitlock) Hunt

Judy was a wonderful lady, went to school with her. Always very pleasant and smiling. Condolences to the family, she will truly be missed.

–Norma Mckinney



Chris and Tim - I was saddened to learn of your mom's passing. Mrs. Pittman was one of my favorite teachers at Freedom. She was tough, but she prepared me for college better than any other teacher. One of my fondest memories was during the first few days of class when she belted out the 1st verse of "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean". I don't recall the circumstances that led to it, but she sang with such gusto that I knew then that I liked her spirit! She was entertaining as well as a great teacher. My heart goes out to you. Wishing you peace and comfort.

–Tommy Allen



Beautiful Julia, SIHP Sincere condolences and prayers to the Pittman family

–Ruth Roseboro



Although I did not know Julia personally, we shared a name. She was an amazing and beautiful woman with a beautiful life. My sister is also Amanda. I wish I had known Julia. Prayers to all. Julia

–Julia Swann McMillan Fallon



RIP Mrs. Pittman you will be missed thank you for all you taught me in high school

–Teddy Berry



–Ima W. Conroy



SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.

–Conley Shirley

Tim and Chris- Michaela and Lilli I have posted on FB how much I loved and will miss your sweet mom. She was precious to me as a teacher and mentor. Her last message to me was commenting that we were Mimi's together! God be with you all. Penny Jenkins

–Penny Jenkins

Chris and Tim, Your mother was a truly wonderful person to me and countless others. She had an innate sense of how to edify people. I quietly smile when I recall my earliest encounters with Ms. Pittman at Freedom High School. As she later put it, “I needed some male bodies who know how to sing” and can probably be taught to “look like they know how to dance.” I can’t remember how many nights she brought both of you, me and Wayne home in the little blue Datsun after Bye Bye Birdie practice ended about 9 pm. The practices were long and tiring, but the ride home was always full of laughter and good-natured banter. Later on, your mother would direct a little comedy called “Charlie’s Aunt.” It was another time-intensive event with its ups and down. However, I remember it as some of the best times of my life because your mother had adopted me as her red-headed “son” that she routinely called “John Dula”. Your mother’s passing makes me deeply sad for her and both of you. However, I get through my grief by remembering all the good times we shared during and after high school. I hope these memories bring you comfort as you deal with your mother’s passing.

Sincerely, Johnny Dula

–Johnny Dula

How I loved this woman! I first met Julia one summer at the Appalachian Writing Project at App State. She was amazing with her commitment to teaching and very entertaining with her many stories. We didn't connect again until after she retired and substituted in my French classes at Freedom High School. She was the best! While I won't be able to attend the services today, I do hope that there are a plethora of memories and stories to share with family and friends.

–Barbara Pitts Aycock

Today, I learned of the passing of one of my cherished high school teachers from Freedom High School, who left us on Christmas Day. I extend my prayers for comfort to her sons and grandchildren during this challenging period. Her profound passion for Literature, Writing, Drama, and Theater greatly influenced numerous students. She not only ignited my own passion for Literature and Theater but also introduced me to the joys of Saturday Night Live. I fondly recall the moments in class when she would embody the character Roseanne Roseannadanna, exclaiming, "It's always something." Her ability to make learning enjoyable is a gift I hold dear, and I strive to incorporate that same spirit into my own teaching. Thank you, Miss Julia Swann Pittman, for the invaluable gifts you imparted to your students. You will be forever missed, yet never forgotten.

–Jimmy Sisk



–Winston and Loretta Hefne

My deepest sympathy to Julia's family. I remember her fondly from our high school graduating class and through the years as we met at class reunions. I have loved her beautiful voice and her enthusiastic performances through the years. Julia always had a warm smile and a sincere interest in each of our lives as we met. I can only imagine what a great High School teacher she has been and how she has enriched the lives of so many students through the years. She will be missed by so many.

–David Buchanan





–Anonymous

Mrs. Pittman, as well called her, was a beautiful, spirited, talented and wonderful teacher and person. She gave herself to her students. She was a large part of Drexel High School. Her presence on earth will be missed. Heaven gained another angel!

–Kim Ritchie Baker



Sincere condolences from Margaret and me to the family of a great lady. We started the first grade together, graduated Harris High in 1961, and remained friends for all these years. Julia was one of the most talented people I ever knew, and was so very supportive of me and my writing. She encouraged me greatly, and as she was known to do, offered constructive criticism at times. The Harris High Class of 1961 has suffered a tremendous loss. May God bless and be with you all. Ed. and Margaret Biddix

–Edwin Biddix



–Bryan Clark

Julia was a wonderful teacher & lady. I used to grade papers for English dept at Freedom I had a love for reading but loved her extras about what we were reading

in class. I went to freedom with Tim. She will be missed

–Vickie Chapman Lutz



–anonymous



I am so sorry to hear this, she was a wonderful teacher and I learned a lot in her class room.

–Michele Burnette

I'm so sorry to hear about Mrs. Pittman . She was a very special teacher. She encouraged me to look deep into myself and express myself in a way to show who I was. To read between the lines and help others. I have thought of her often as I go through life remembering her teaching. It's been over 40 years when I had her as a teacher. She was always remembered.

–Vanessa Costner

When God created beauty, he threw away his mold after making Ms. Pittman. She had a contagious smile and laughter. When spirit week rolled around, she would wear her 1970's attire. I believe anyone who had Ms. Pittman will be forever in debt to her knowledge. I am tjankful I got to know her not just as my english teacher but a lifelong friend. Class of '88 Cassie Coith

teacher, but a lifelong friend. -Class of '92 Gene Gaither

-Gene Gaither

My heart is completely broken. She was an educational warrior and the reason so many of us are who we are today. We love you Mrs. Pittman. You were God's hands and your love will forever be felt and remembered. Love to all of you
Jonathan Parham

-Jonathan Parham



God bless

-Steve Peeler



Dear Julia, your presence will forever leave a light in our hearts. Love Judy and Troy

-Judy and Troy Martin



It is with a heavy heart that I share my condolences on the passing of Ms. Pittman, a remarkable woman and beloved teacher. She was not only a guiding light in my life, encouraging me with her wisdom and kindness, but she also extended that same warmth and support to my daughter, Kristen, as she began her journey at Ms. Pittman's beloved alma mater, Western Carolina University. It feels fitting that such a beautiful soul would leave this world on a day as radiant and meaningful as Christmas Day. Her legacy of compassion, inspiration, and dedication to her students

will continue to shine brightly in the hearts of all who had the privilege of knowing her. My deepest condolences to her family during this difficult time. Rest well, Ms. Pittman; you will be deeply missed but forever cherished.

–Sherry Caroway

To the family, I am so very sorry to hear of the passing of my all-time favorite teacher, Mrs. Julie Pittman. She definitely was one of a kind and they just don't make them like her anymore. She truly made an impact on my life and I have looked back fondly of my time spent with her in Basic Speech (x2, there is more to that story). There were also the times she would get on to me about using swear words often remarking, "using words like that make you sound uneducated". Mrs. Pittman truly loved and cared about her students, often after they had graduated and moved on. After serving in the military and coming home, I would often see her inside Patriot stadium, cheering on our beloved Freedom Patriots, and she would always take the time to say hello, ask me how I was doing and telling me how proud she was of me! I Loved Mrs. Pittman and I appreciate the impact she had on my life. She will be missed by many, but I am sure when she walked into glory, into the arms of Jesus she heard these words, "well done, my good and faithful servant"!

–Stephen Hines



–Ellen Settlemyer

Freedom High School, Freshman year, 1977. Day 1: My homeroom teacher stops in the middle of here "Welcome To The Jungle" speech to argue, full out verbal fight with the teacher on the other side of the partition. It seemed real, they were

good at this, the other teacher (that I never actually had as a teacher) was Mrs. Pittman. These two comedians taught me on day 1 not to take things quite so seriously. Their "fight" was all show, it truly "broke the ice" of the new school, new year, new world we had begun.

–Perry Hilton Lachot

Freedom High class of 1988, thank you for expressing the part about Grading papers was a labor of love. My memory dates back to 1986, we had a writing assignment. She dramatically handed every ones papers back and said only one person in the class made an A on this assignment . Everyone else needs to re write their papers using this one as a template. I was shocked that the one person that made the Ms. Pittman cut, was my paper. She would appreciate this beautifully written obituary as a testimony of a well lived life. Rest in peace Julia.

–Amy Orders Greene



I'm so sorry to hear of Ms. Pittman's; but, I'm even more glad and grateful that she died in The Lord, Who is The Giver of Eternal Life! I pray continued comfort to her family both now and always as they know she's alive and well with Jesus! I thank You, Lord, for blessing us with Ms. Pittman as a teacher. I learned a lot from her English Lit classes particularly about government where she had us research and defend our assigned government (role play). My group had fascism and when a fellow student spoke a snide but true remark that we couldn't "defend", Ms. Pittman, noticing our speechlessness, quickly stepped in and asked them a question about their government that immediately ended their condescending attitude and argument! It's been almost 40 years, and I still think about it periodically and am still grateful! Thank you, Ms. Pittman for the care and love you shared for your students! Thank you, Chris and Tim, for sharing your mom! May God's perfect peace that passes all

SHARING YOUR MOTHER: MAY GOD'S PERFECT PEACE THAT PASSES ALL understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!

—Deatra Harbison

Julia and I as (Mimi & Nana) shared a unique opportunity as grandmothers to Michaela and Lillie. We were friends who because of our love for our children became best friends for thirty years. I will remember our good times, the joy, laughter and the amazing common bond we shared. Peace and love, my dear friend. I will miss you..... Brenda

—Brenda Kanipe



Julia was a true renaissance woman who had the sweetest demeanor! I never had the privilege to take one of her classes, but I had classes in the partitioned classrooms next to hers, and as the way Freedom High School was designed, we could hear most everything said in the adjoining partitions. So many times I became intrigued by her lectures that my concentration would drift to the sound of her voice and it was like I was in her classroom in a way. At the same time, I was at the age between Chris and Tim, so I got to know them both. I could tell how much their mother influenced them and how much she encouraged them to reach their creative and intellectual potentials in a gentle, free-spirited way. As an adult, I got to sing with her in the Morganton Combined Choir and I know she enjoyed singing so much. Chris and Tim, I am so very sorry for your loss, and I think you were very lucky to have such an amazing mother. She raised two fine men.

—B. Scott Andrews

Ms Pittman as I will always know here was one of the first



Ms. Pittman as I will always know there was one of the first people that believed I could be something. She convinced me to be in the school musical, I met a girl, and had a life long love of music. Thanks Ms Pittman. You made a difference.

—Jim Bridges

I had Ms Pittman at Drexel and she was a wonderful! She could the great stories like Romeo and Juliet come alive! I enjoyed her class so much! She could speak French beautifully!! Lovely lady!

—Cheryl Miller



Our sincere condolences to the family. Julia was a classmate of ours at Harris High School. She was a close friend of Nancy and one of the members of a singing group that they formed. Julia was an outstanding person in many respects. She was musically talented, intellectually gifted, and had a delightful personality. We can only imagine the positive influence that she must have had on hundreds of students. She will be greatly missed at our Class of 1961 reunions and certainly in many other places.

—Joe McKinney and Nancy Petersen McKinney



Ms. Pittman had a beautiful personality and wonderful zest for life. She would often sit in the auditorium at Freedom, grading papers, listening to our Chamber Singers practice. I remember her love of directing watching her help with the club at school. Granted, I graduated 36 years ago, I never forgot her beautiful smile. She sang like an angel in combined choir. She will be greatly missed. My condolences to the family who will never fill the hole she leaves in their lives. but will forever carry the unwavering

leaves in their lives, but will forever carry the unwavering love of this amazing person.

–Davina Evans

–Joe McKinney and Nancy

Prayer and blessings to the famyof one of my favorite teachers. A special teacher and most of all a special and caring person

–Harlteen Stamps, Jr



I will remember your smile as you taught my English glass. Thank you, Freedom class 1995

–Don Thao



I remember when Julia, her husband and the boys moved next door to my parents. She always had such kind words about my mom but she was thrilled to have a babysitter right next door. Once when they went to a party and I stayed with Chris and Tim , one of the boys was acting crazy fell off the arm of the chair. It was obvious that he was hurting. I called Julia, mom and Carol came over to wait with us. I was afraid they'd be upset but the first thing she said was it wasn't a great party. Glad to have a reason to come home. At ED it was determined a collar bone was broken. Now, I don't remember which one it was ; Chris or Tim. Susan Williams

–Susan Williams

Mrs. Pittman was one of the most treasures teachers I had. I have very dear and pleasant memories of her. I was so pleased she had a Facebook account where I could see how she had been doing all those years since high school. She dearly loved her family and she also had an infectious love for her students. I loved her

English class. She is and will be sorely missed. My love and prayers to her family at this sad time. I

To Julia's family and closest friends, I was in Julia's French class at Drexel High School. This amazing lady always entered the classroom with an infectious smile and a positive attitude. She was genuine and passionate in all she said and accomplished. I will have fond memories of that beautiful lady forever. Bless you as you grieve. May God give you comfort day after day.

—Cynthia Webb Wilkinson



This was one of the most amazing teachers I ever had the privilege to teach me. She was the one who introduced me to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and others. She in many ways was the one who challenged me to read between the lines of both works and life. I can only pray there are teachers like her today that make it an awesome experience learning the greatest works of all time.. Dear Julia, God Bless You..Heather Carswell

—Heather Deanne Carswell

I'm so sorry to hear of Mrs. Pittman's passing. She was my Honors English teacher in High School. She was an amazing teacher and one that I've never forgotten after 30 years. She cared about her students and wanted each of them to excel. She made a lasting impression in my life and I will always remember her. To her family, my condolences and prayers to you all.

—Ramika Rhodes

–Kelvin McRae



She was one of the best teachers that I had. So kind and patient. Missed her after she left East Burke. God bless her. And will be praying for her family

–Pamela Deal Smith



Prayers for the family She was a wonderful person and teacher !!

–Carmen Rogers



Julia was a friend of many years. Always a pleasure to see and talk with her. She will be missed. RIP dear one...

–Laura McCoy



She was truly one of a kind, as beautiful a soul as she was a stunningly beautiful woman. She was a true teacher, finding exactly the way to reach each of her students. I was blessed to learn from her. There are so many points in my life that she was a part of; the love of theatre, discovering amazing authors. becoming a competent writer We also shared our

...and, becoming a competent writer. We also shared our love of Western Carolina University, GO Cats! She was gently amused at the ups and downs of my youthful infatuation with her son Chris and strongly supportive of me in the adventures of my adult life. Like so many others, she

followed my life on Facebook and left many wonderful comments. The world is darker without her.



Pittman family So sad to hear of this loss. She was such a an inspiration to many of us students at Freedom High. Prayers for u all but especially Ms Pittman on her Heavenly journey.

—Roger Austin Hart

Julia lit up every room when she entered. I always looked forward to being in her presence because I knew it would be engaging and energizing. I know that I always learned something from her as she was always teaching! What a gift to so many and I am grateful I was privileged to know her.

—Kathleen Kilbourne

My freshman and sophomore homeroom and English teacher. I knew then there was something special about her but until later in life did I realize she cared about each student she came in contact with. They don't make them like this sweet lady

—Mike Evitt



So saddened by this news, Julia and I were friends from Spruce Pine. Our Parents were friends, our sisters were friends. I will miss Julia and our conversations. My fondness condolences to Julia's family, she will be lovingly

be remembered by many... Margaret Tappan Browning

–Margaret Tappan Browning



I was so sad to hear of your mother's passing. She was my favorite teacher of all time. Once I had her for English, I made sure that I had her class every quarter after that. I truly loved learning from her. And then to participate in plays directed by her, Mr. Epley and Mr. Gosseler was absolutely amazing. They nurtured and fostered my love for drama, music, and dance that I still carry with me. Those days were the best. I will keep your family in my prayers, as you navigate and find your new normal.

–Angie (Cannon) Buchanan



Chris so sorry for this devastating loss My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family

–Cheryl Cabrera-Rodriquez

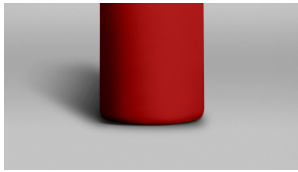
–Michelle (Shellie) Perry

Tribute to this amazing woman. I moved to Morganton my junior year of high school. I remember her being one the first people to make me feel welcomed at my new school. I always enjoyed her enthusiasm and energy, that seemed in an endless supply. Truly a person that made a difference in my life. Thank you!

–Bryan Buss



Mrs. Pittman was a staple in the education community. As a student teacher, she taught my dad at Drexel. She was at



Freedom while I was there. Although I never had her as a teacher, she was over clubs that I was in. She was so much fun allowing us to express ourselves while showing our patriot pride. Later in my life, she was a substitute in my daughter's classes at Patton High School. She truly taught

children the joy of learning and engaged with them so they wanted to learn and do their best. She will be missed!

—Mandy Smith Hice

I am so sorry for your family's loss. Julia was a force of nature with so many talents. I always felt better knowing she was in this world. I loved teaching with her, and I treasured her friendship. Please know my thoughts and prayers are with you.

—annelle mulwee



To the family of Julia Swan ! It broke my heart when I heard of Julia's passing ! I went to school with her for 12 years and graduated with her from Harris High School in 1961!! The last time I saw her was at our 61 st class reunion on June 19th. She was so bubbly and vivaciously beautiful as she always was in school I will and I know the family will miss her terribly ,but I'm sure she is in Heaven now with her family! Please accept my heartfelt sympathy and I will continue to pray for you all!! RIP my friend until we meet again!! Love you!!

—Ruth Ann Doane



So very saddened to hear of Ms. Pittman's passing. She was my all time favorite teacher. I have such fond memories of her. The part in her obituary that talks about her desire to see struggling students that wanted to learn and to push them to do better, was my personal experience.

She pulled me aside one day and gave me the most eye opening pep talk that completely changed the path of my future from that day forward! I will never forget that conversation. She gave me purpose! She made me want to make her proud and to have pride in myself. Within months,

I went from making D's & E's to all straight A's and advancing into her College Prep American Literature class. She displayed my Great Gatsby project, for years; to show other struggling students what you can achieve, if you put your mind to it! She will forever be my "Saving Grace"! She changed the course of my life and I feel I owe it all to her! My heartfelt condolences to her family! She was truly an amazing and beautiful (inside and out) soul!

—Jaime Karm Burke

I am so sorry for your loss. She was a part of some of the best memories from high school. One of my favorite patriots of all times!!!!

—Karen Clark

Godspeed Mrs. Pittman. You brought a little bit of glamour to these hills with your mega-watt smile.

—Morgan Clendenen



She was truly all that and more, we kept in touch and were friends on Facebook I am sorry to hear of her passing. Condolences to the family and she will be missed but never forgotten. Arnetta Caldwell

—Arnetta Caldwell

Ms. Pittman was one of my favorite teachers. We became



especially close when she directed me in several shows and drama competitions. My acting career when I was younger was due in no small part to her encouragement. I am now a teacher and hope to pass her legacy of kindness

and connection to my own students. May her memory be a blessing.

As director of worship arts at FUMC Morganton, working with Julia in choirs and play productions was one of my greatest pleasures. She taught me a great deal about drama direction, as I watched her work with young people whose talents blossomed with her in structuring. What a treasure of a person, and what a blessing she was to me!

—Amalie Hinson

—Sidney Simmons

Tim and family, I just wanted to tell you how truly sorry I am about the loss of your mother. I remember her fondly at FHS and at FUMC. Please know she will be greatly missed by all and that your family is in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. Wendi Jehnzen Arnone

—Wendi Arnone



Julia was one of the most engaging teachers EBHS had. She cared about her students and forced them to leave their comfort zone. MMM 1976 was one of the productions she did that impacted many. She will be missed by those who knew her. Rest easy dear lady. Until we meet again. Warmest condolences and prayers are extended to her family.

—Steve Graves



Tim, Chris and family, I am so sorry for your loss. I am so thankful for having the opportunity to have known your mom as a friend and neighbor. She was there for us and she knew she could always count on us. It is amazing how much she has contributed to the community from an early age. I don't need to tell you what a wonderful parent she was because you know that first hand. God used her in special ways to help others. Now she is resting in His arms and waiting with anticipation for the rest of us to join her.

–Susan McCoy



Julia was a very loving sweet woman she will be greatly missed. Tim you and your family are in my prayers.

–Jeremy Moody