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Ruby Deaton Harbison Pharr

Sept. 30, 1929 - March 8, 2015

Ruby Deaton Harbison Pharr passed away peacefully on March 8, 2015 at Grace Ridge Retirement Community in Morganton. She was born September 30, 1929 in Montgomery County, NC to the late Bernard Robert Deaton and Annie Lu Byrd Deaton and grew up in Quincy, FL. Her family moved to Morganton, NC when she was in her teens. She married the late Leighton Walter Harbison.

Ruby Harbison graduated with a B.A. from Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory, NC in 1963 and earned an M.S. and Education Specialist in Science from Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina.

In 1966 she began her teaching career at the newly opened Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton where she taught general biology, environmental science, botany, and anatomy and physiology. She co-taught “Ecology of the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia,” which included a week-long field trip. For many years she taught a course in the wildflowers of western North Carolina that culminated in weekend-long camping trips to identify the flowers of the region.

In 1986 Ruby Pharr received the first “Excellence in Teaching Award” from Western Piedmont Community College and was named Instructor Emerita at Western Piedmont Community College upon her retirement after 29 years’ service in 1995.

During her retirement, she served as the first curator of the Burke County History Museum.

Ruby Harbison authored *Trail Guide to Bluff Mountain Preserve, Ashe County, North Carolina*. The North Carolina Nature Conservancy awarded her with the Avery Holman Stewardship Award in recognition of both her eight years' service as the first chair of

the Bluff Mountain Stewardship Committee and the Bluff Mountain *Trail Guide*. Ruby Harbison Pharr also served on the Bat Cave Stewardship Committee of the Nature Conservancy.

Ruby Pharr was a founder and board member of the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina and both the namesake and first recipient of the "Ruby Pharr Conservation Volunteer Award" given by the Foothills Conservancy in recognition of her volunteer efforts and lifelong devotion to land and water conservation in the Blue Ridge Foothills.

She is survived by four children: Cynthia Burkhart of Fort Wayne, IN; Cathy McKinney and husband Harold, of Boone, NC; Elaine Hathor of Jefferson, NC; Scott Harbison and wife Beth of Morganton, NC; a brother, Don Allen Deaton and wife Alice Lee Deaton of Winter Haven, FL; eight grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

In addition to her parents, Ruby was preceded in death by her brother, Robert Bernard Deaton.

Funeral services will be held at 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at the First United Methodist Church with Rev. Dr. John Fowler officiating. Burial will follow in Forest Hill Cemetery. The family will receive friends Tuesday night from 6:00 until 8:00 p.m. at Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center.

Memorials may be made to the History Museum of Burke County, PO Box 416, Morganton, NC 28680-0416 or Foothills Conservancy of NC, PO Box 3023, Morganton, NC 28680 or at www.foothillsconservancy.org.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.