



Ms. Carmen Iris Nelson

January 9, 1929 - April 21, 2023

Carmen was born in Carbondale, Illinois in the Great Depression year of 1929, and she went out as the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. She was the youngest of five siblings, the longest-lived of them, all the family of a Methodist minister and his wife, the church organist.

Although shy by nature, she was a friend to those in need and found purpose and joy in helping others. Meals on Wheels, Autism Society president, elementary school librarian, and later, a tutor, were some of the many roles she had.

She was a McKendree College (IL) graduate in elementary education before she married Bill Nelson on Valentine's Day. They soon had two sons. In 1958, they moved to Tallahassee, where Bill joined the Florida State University Physics department. There they made many lifelong friends over the years. Back then she was not above dressing up as a witch on Halloween complete with a blacked-out tooth to startle us little kids.

Four years, from 1963-1966, were spent in Manhattan, Kansas. Toward the end of this stay we all huddled under a table in the basement as a tornado passed over our house, lifting the roof off of a house across the street and leaving us without electricity for more than a week.

The family returned to Tallahassee in 1966. Carmen earned a Master's degree in Library Science at FSU. She became the media specialist at Chaires Elementary School and oversaw the transition to computer systems for indexing and multimedia presentations.

Her nurturing, encouragement and setting an example of education and hard work were the underpinnings of the success of her two sons, Alan and Ron. Her planning, preparation and good fortune in finding able and loving caretakers has provided a stable environment and good quality of life for her disabled daughter, Nancy.

Many memorable vacations were spent on St George Island with her children and grandchildren. She and Bill travelled and learned on trips to Croatia, Slovenia, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Costa Rica, and via Concorde to London returning on the ocean liner QE-II.

She was a 20-year survivor of breast cancer and a knee replacement operation. Life Exercise classes and her many friends at the Tallahassee Senior Center helped her attain her goal of independent living in her senior years. Only in the final years did vascular dementia diminish her ability to take care of herself, but not her spirit. We thank the many caregivers who assisted her with patience and dedication, and allowed her to remain in her home until April 21, 2023.

For her many friends we ask them to recall what they treasured in their relationship with her and to know that she treasured their friendship.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Autism Society of America, Susan Komen Foundation, or Alzheimer's Foundation.

Tribute Wall



“ *Ms. Nelson was my librarian at Chaires Elementary (both the old and new Chaires) in the '80s and early '90s.*

I have fond memories of her teaching us the value of books and the importance of reading. I loved how she taught us the anatomy of a book (from the cover, to the spine, to the table of contents) and to respect books (don't eat or drink while reading, and use a bookmark versus dog earing a page). She gets the credit for teaching me the Dewey Decimal System and the card catalogue (something my kids today don't know much about). Ms. Nelson also sang with us, and I certainly remember "Head and Shoulders Baby 1, 2, 3."

When we moved to the new Chaires, the library was enormous and felt fancy with new technology. All kids were in awe of Ms. Nelson's wand with a red laser that scanned barcodes on books when you checked them out. Additionally, we students looked forward to volunteering our time each week by straightening certain sections of the library, respecting the books, and keeping it tidy.

As I grew up, she participated in showers and events for my wedding and babies. It was truly special to have her celebrate with me.

Ms. Nelson was a gentle, kind soul who educated scores of children on the importance of the power of books. She will be missed and fondly remembered.

-Jackie Houck

Jackie Houck - May 24, 2023 at 11:33 AM

CH

“ Carmen and I became fast friends when I started teaching at Chaires Elementary in 1984. She helped me over many new-teacher hurdles. After she retired, we stayed in touch. She was a Red Hat member (RH name “Lady Libris”) and sometimes we would go to lunch or breakfast with our friends Anna & Susie. They are in the photos with Carmen. Ron & Alan, your mom was an absolute jewel. She was a fantastic friend and I loved her very much. She used to speak of all 3 of you, her children, with pride and great love. Please accept my very sincere condolences.



Carla Houck - May 23, 2023 at 12:46 PM

PC

“ Aunt Carmen was my mother's(Bonnylin Naomi Castle) youngest sister. We were able to keep in touch these last few years and she was a great comfort and help when I lost my own brother and sister. I remember visiting the Nelsons in Kansas and Aunt Carmen teaching us to play "Oh Heck", a card game and a big deal coming from that strict Methodist upbringing. I last saw her when she was visiting in Los Angeles, we kept in touch exchanging cards and phone calls through the years. I am so grateful to Ron for reaching .out and keeping we cousins in touch with eachother. I will remember you always Aunt Carmen.

Phyllis Castle - May 03, 2023 at 10:54 AM

TL

“ Unfortunately I never got to meet my great aunt Carmen but my mom Barbara spoke very highly of her and loved her dearly, my condolences to her sons, daughter and friends.

Tammy Lawson

Tammy Lawson - May 01, 2023 at 04:13 PM

NF

“Carmen and I were long time friends; first as neighbors and later a visitor after I moved to Chattanooga. I visited Carmen often after I retired and stayed on her basement couch, where she generously let me bring my current dog! We enjoyed playing games together and going to her exercise class at the community center where there was a funny and energetic leader. We liked walking at Lake Ellis. I have had regrets about not retiring to Tallahassee. I did miss Carmen and will still miss her.

1

Nancy T Fletcher - April 28, 2023 at 10:08 AM