



Wanda S. Dowell

April 2, 1930 - April 9, 2021

Wanda Sue Dowell

In loving memory of Wanda Dowell who passed away April 9, 2021 from heart failure at age 91. Wanda Thorpe was born on April 2, 1930 in Harlan County, Kentucky. She had a hardscrabble life in a small coal mining town during the Great Depression and World War II. Wanda graduated as valedictorian from Wallins Creek High School in 1948. After the war, she married James Walker Dowell following his service in the Pacific with the Army Air Corps. They moved to Alexandria, Virginia in 1951 with their one-year-old son James Donn Dowell.

Wanda worked throughout her life, most prominently as director for 35 years at the Fort Ward Museum in the City of Alexandria. Fort Ward is a former Union Army installation and was the fifth largest fort built to defend Washington, D.C. in the Civil War. In the 1990s, Wanda was a founding member of the Virginia Civil War Trails historical association. Today the program guides visitors to more than 1,200 civil war sites. In 1997, she was given the Southeastern Museums Conference James Short Award for recognition of her leadership in preservation of American history in Virginia. As a 55-year resident of Alexandria, Wanda in 2016 was inducted into the City of Alexandria "Living Legends" program whose mission is to identify, honor and chronicle the lives of individuals who have contributed to the community in an exemplary and lasting way, and have significantly impacted the quality of life in Alexandria and who serve as an inspiration to others. Wanda's guiding

motto was “Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way.”

Wanda lived her life in faith and was an active member in her church through choir, Bible study, and charity work. In 2017, she moved to Williamsburg, VA to live with her son Jim and wife Terry in an active living community. Always an avid walker and an exercise instructor for seniors, Wanda became a maker of fleece blankets for charity and a seamstress of hundreds of cloth face masks for numerous nonprofit organizations.

Her home church was James River Baptist Church in Williamsburg and continued to be a member of the First Baptist Church of Alexandria. A gravesite burial service will be on April 14 at National Memorial Park cemetery in Falls Church, Va. A memorial service at James River Baptist in Williamsburg will be held at a later date.

Wanda is predeceased by her husband James W. Dowell, brother James Thorpe, and parents Clyde and Marie Thorpe. Remembrances in her name can be made to the Alice Lloyd College, 100 Purpose Rd, Pippa Passes, KY 41844, under the Wanda S. Dowell Endowment Fund.

Previous Events

Graveside Service

APR **14**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

National Memorial Park
7482 Lee Hwy
Falls Church, VA 22042

Tribute Wall



“ *Wanda S. Dowell*

October 27, 2022 at 09:45 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Wanda S. Dowell.*



April 13, 2021 at 12:31 PM



“ *I absolutely loved this lady. I lived across the street from her for 32 years. She was kind, sweet and loving. She was a great gardener and her yard always looked so lovely. When she moved to Williamsburg, we stayed in touch. She always sounded so upbeat and happy. My condolences go out to Donn and Terry. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Sending blessings. Jan Davis*

Janice (Jan) Davis - April 12, 2021 at 02:25 PM