

Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery Inventory

State and Water Streets, Dover DE 19903

Lot Number: 18 Space: F4

Find A Grave # 277132695

Name: **Shank, Dr. Donna Gaver**

Birth date: July 17, 1944 Death date: January 2, 2024 Burial Date: December 10, 2024 Age: 79
b. Somers Point, NJ

Spouse: Luther Dreher Shank III (1944-2018), m. November 24, 1984

Children: Luther Dreher Shank IV, a.k.a. Morgan

Parents: Donald Gaver and Dorothy Gaver

Siblings: Eric D. Gaver

Residence: Lewes, DE

Cause of death/Burial/Obituary: see next page; cremains

Service/occupation information: Early childhood educator

Officiate: none

Lot Owner: Ralph C. Wilson; Perpetual care purchased 1-28-65 by estate of Elizabeth Beers Wilson

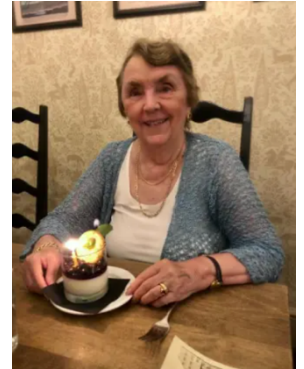
Inscription/Epitaph:

Dr. Donna
Gaver Shank
July 17, 1944

DIMENSIONS: H 6" x W 16" x D 9"

STYLE: headstone

No repairs needed



Inventory date: February 8, 2020 Recorder: Nancy Quinn Update: December 10, 2024

Donna Gaver Shank Obituary

On January 2, 2024 – Donna Gaver Shank, Ed.D. peacefully departed this earth, joining her loving parents, grandparents, and husband of 33 years.

Donna was born on July 17, 1944, in Somers Point, New Jersey, at Shore Memorial Hospital. When Donna came into this world, her mother and grandparents gushed over Donna's big brown eyes. Everyone in the family to that point had blue eyes.

Donna's mother, Dorothy (Errickson) Gaver, had previously served as one of the only full-time lab technicians for Shore Memorial Hospital until she married in the summer of 1943. Donna's father, Donald A. Gaver, was serving in the Navy in the Pacific during World War II and received news of her birth while stationed in Pearl Harbor. During Christmas of 1945, when Donna was just seventeen months old, father and daughter were finally united for the first time.

After graduating at the top of her class from Lower Cape May Regional High School in 1962, Donna continued her education at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. In 1964, Donna was involved in the establishment of the new Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study. She was elected President of the Chandler Society, an undergraduate honor's society distinguishing students who excelled in leadership, scholarship, character, service, and professional promise. In both high school and college, she participated in the marching band as head majorette – twirling a baton that frequently was on fire! She went on to earn a Bachelor's degree from Tuft's University in Child Study.

Donna worked and supervised in a few kindergarten classrooms, which inspired her to pursue graduate-level education. She attended the University of Virginia (UVA), earning her Master's and Doctoral degrees in Early Childhood Education. She went on to spend part of her career as an associate professor at Elizabethtown College, while living in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Donna remained in close contact with friends, Barbara and Geoff Irvine, whom she met at UVA. In early 1984, the Irvines planned to be in Hershey, PA, for a Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) Convention. Barbara invited Donna to attend and set her up on a blind date. After some hemming and hawing from Donna, Barbara exclaimed, "For crying out loud, you don't have to marry the guy!"

As fate would have it, Donna's blind date with LD Shank sparked a whirlwind romance. Three months later, the two announced their engagement and on November 24, 1984, Donna married Luther D. Shank III in Cold Spring, NJ.

In 1985, Donna and LD bought their first home together in Dover, Delaware. Two years later and only 5 days after Donna's 43rd birthday, the couple welcomed their first and only child into the world – a boy, Luther D. Shank IV, who they nicknamed "Morgan." Up to this point, Donna had dedicated her life to early childhood development, and she was overjoyed to have a child of her own to nurture.

The family stayed in Dover until the fall of 1995, when they moved to the quaint, historic town of Odessa, Delaware. Donna and LD purchased two acres of land nestled above the Appoquinimink River, then spent 18 months pouring careful and creative energy into the construction of their dream house. Donna enjoyed curating the interior with the couple's antique furnishings and oversaw the landscaping, planting a majority herself.

One evening, while sitting on the screen porch, LD asked Donna, "What are you most proud of?" After thinking for a moment, Donna responded: "Raising Morgan but a close second place would be designing and building this home with you."

When Morgan was old enough to go to school, Donna started working part-time at the University of Delaware. She supervised numerous student teachers in elementary schools across New Castle and Kent counties. She also loved collaborating with her husband on commercial and residential real estate investments. She devoted herself to her son's education and supported a myriad of his extracurricular activities.

Donna held longtime memberships in the National Society of the Colonial Dames in the State of Delaware, The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Society of the Mayflower Descendants, Junior League of Wilmington, Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion, and various women's and gardening clubs. Her love of horticulture was evident in the surrounding areas of every home in which she lived – a passion she shared with her mother and her brother, Eric.

When Donna was a little girl, she would often visit a family property on the Tuckahoe River in New Jersey, where her grandparents, Raymond and Martha Errickson, constructed a modest dwelling near the banks of the river. The family affectionately referred to it as "The Shack." In 2009, Donna breathed new life into the property. She designed and oversaw the construction of a unique, circular home to capture views of the woods and the water. Donna loved inviting friends and family over to her "River Retreat" for entertainment, relaxation, and pontoon boat rides.

Donna lived in Odessa until the spring of 2019, when she moved to The Moorings in Lewes, Delaware. She was very appreciative of the community and staff – especially with their commitment to safety and care during the pandemic.

Donna was amazingly curious and humble, accomplished but never sought praise or recognition. She possessed a high level of emotional intelligence, whether counseling children, college students, dear friends, or family. Whatever Donna put her mind to, she did it quietly, and she did it well. She exhibited grace and dignity, inspiring countless women and leading by example. While she served others in numerous capacities, it was not a mystery that her favorite role was being a world-class mother.

Donna was preceded in death by her husband of 33 years, L.D. Shank III; her parents, Donald and Dorothy Gaver; and her brother-in-law, Charles Wahlig. She is survived by her son Luther D. Shank IV (Morgan); her brother Eric D. Gaver and his wife Diane R. Gaver; her sister-in-law Connie Wahlig; her nieces and nephews: Justine Gaver Magariel, Curtis E. Gaver, Beth Nolan, Anne Lee, Cort Wahlig, Charlie Wahlig, Whitney Jackson, Jaime Jackson.

Funeral services and interment will be private at a time convenient for the family. Memorials in her name may be made to the University of Virginia – School of Education and Human Development – Contact (434) 924-7018 or uas@virginia.edu for more information.

Condolences may be sent to the family at: Morgan Shank PO Box 461 Dover, DE 19903 – and can also be made online at www.torbertfuneral.com