



## Ann Barrows Avery Shank

December 24, 1940 - October 12, 2024

Ann Barrows Avery Shank of Floyd, Virginia passed away peacefully on October 12, 2024, at the age of 83. Born Christmas Eve, 1940 in Montpelier, VT, she was the eldest of four sisters born to Rev. Reginald D. Avery and Miriam (Meeker) Avery. Growing up, her family moved several times through New England, upstate New York, and Long Island in accordance with Reginald's church assignments.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Non-Western Civilizations from the University of Rochester, NY, she wed Ralph Bowden of Wading River, NY and embarked on a teaching career. She earned a Master's degree in History from Columbia University Teachers College in 1963, and taught high school social studies and college-level history, first in Roslyn, NY and then Greensboro, NC, where the couple moved to enable Ralph's doctoral studies at UNC Chapel Hill.

Ann became a devoted full-time mother in 1970, and the couple soon moved to Cookeville, TN to raise their two children in a rural setting. She was an enthusiastic gardener and embraced the "back to the land" ethos of the times, raising chickens, stocking a pond with catfish, and filling the pantry and freezer with home-grown produce. The family was a reliable presence at First Presbyterian Church of Cookeville, where Ann sang in the choir, served as an Elder, and led Sunday School classes. Ann and Ralph divorced in 1981.

After meeting at a church retreat, Ann was wooed by Ernest Shank, a widower and retired teacher from Sarasota, FL. The two wed in Cookeville in 1983, and

the following year the family moved to Sarasota. Ann took a job with Sarasota County, first in the school district and later as the County's Historic Librarian, a role she held for 16 years. She and Ernie were active in the First Presbyterian Church of Sarasota, and she supported him in establishing the Sarasota/Manatee chapter of Habitat for Humanity. After Ernie's passing in 1989, Ann remained committed to Habitat and other charitable organizations, helping to raise money and build houses for the underprivileged in Sarasota; traveling to Kenya with a mission group to help construct a church building for a rural congregation there; and rebuilding housing in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Ann retired from Sarasota County in 2007, and returned to the beautiful southern Appalachian Mountains that she loved, joining her youngest sister in Floyd in 2007. She once again found a spiritual home and community in the local Presbyterian Church of Floyd. True to her calling, she soon took on key roles in the Floyd County Historical Society and volunteered with organizations including SustainFloyd and the Plenty! food pantry. She embraced her creative side, nurturing a love of photography that began as a child with her Brownie camera, and beginning new ventures in basket-weaving and print-making, thanks to the robust arts community in Floyd. Throughout her life, Ann remained devoted to the principles instilled in her by her parents—faith, frugality, and generosity. She rarely turned down an opportunity to contribute what she could to anyone in need. In each new community she moved to, she created lasting friendships and maintained relationships with an increasingly far-flung extended family, including her in-laws from Ralph's family and Ernie's three daughters and their families. Ann's kindness, loyalty, and whole-hearted embrace of the never-ending project of improving the world will be remembered by all who knew her.

Ann is preceded in death by her sister Roslyn (Avery) Fishbaugh of Colden, NY, husband Ernie Shank, stepdaughter Cathy (Shank) White, and many friends and relatives who will no doubt welcome her joyfully to what waits beyond this earthly life. She is survived by her sisters Beth Avery of Orleans,

MA and Jayn Avery of Floyd; children Eric Bowden of Sarasota and Jennifer Bowden of Bellingham, WA; stepdaughters Meribeth Shank of Goshen, IN and Wendy Shank of Washington, DC; grandchildren Zoe, Quinn, Justin, Nadia, Andy, and Emily; five nieces; and a growing group of great-grandchildren, grand-nieces and grand-nephews. May her memory remain a source of peace and inspiration to all who were touched by Ann's spirit.

# Tribute Wall

SB

“ I knew Ann as extended family and as a student in my inner relational skills courses. As extended family, I benefited from her tendency to buy local art as gifts. In conversations she modeled curiosity and kindness. She enjoyed listening to and learning from others.

*I've been blessed to purchase her home in town which helped me see her wide interests in the world. She loved art and books! I look forward to taking care of her tree which happens to be landing near my morning walk and to planting a garden to feed birds and insects at the home in town as a way to remember her.*

---

**Sandy Burg** - October 22, 2024 at 04:11 PM

JE

“ 3 files added to the album *Lifetime of memories*



---

**Jennifer** - October 22, 2024 at 02:02 PM

JB

“ We've picked a sunny spot on the hillside to plant a flowering dogwood tree, and anyone who wishes can share some thoughts and memories of Mom. We'll gather tomorrow (Tuesday, Oct. 22) at 5pm, near 180 Zephyr Circle SE in Floyd. Parking is limited, so we encourage carpooling to the extent possible. It is a grassy hillside, so sturdy footwear is recommended. We think there is also sufficient wifi signal to set up a Zoom meeting for anyone who would like to attend remotely, so please let me know if you would like to be sent a link for that.

---

**Jennifer Bowden** - October 21, 2024 at 09:24 AM

AA

“ I remember when Ann first moved to Floyd and she bought a home off of Rte 8, not too far from Jayn. The three of us would watch old black and white westernn movies and share a dinner. It was a lot of fun. When Ann started creating her computer art, everyone was amazed at the quality of her artwork. She could take a photograph and enhance them with quite a flair. As years passed and she moved into town I would often see her walking into town for the Farmer's Market. It was wonderful to see how quickly she established her own network of friends. The last time I saw her was at the Farmer's Mkt a year ago with her son. R.I.P. Ann. You were a light to many.

---

**Amy Lou Adams** - October 19, 2024 at 12:49 PM

SB

“ 2 files added to the album Memorial Gardens in honor of Ann



---

**Sandy Burg** - October 18, 2024 at 04:54 PM

BG

“ Ann was a good friend and part of my extended family. She always had a welcoming and warm disposition. Her community activities throughout her life displayed her caring for wherever she lived and her passion for service. Having been brought up in a religious family, her faith was always a part of her expression in life as well. She will be missed by many. May her soul know peace.

Bob Grubel - October 17, 2024 at 07:38 AM



“ Ann was a cherished person I knew for several years. She was a Community Advisor to SustainFloyd & contributed many great ideas for how to help this community. She was also active in the Floyd County Womens Club. I remember her organizing the Club's annual cleanup of Black Ridge Rd, even accommodating my lack of abilities. Then, when I joined the church she attended, she welcomed me. But, she contributed to this community & many community organizations in far more ways. Yes, she will be missed. Who she was & what she did will continue on & continue to help this community. She will live on in many people's hearts & memories.

Nancy Manley - October 16, 2024 at 04:54 PM

JB

“ 9 files added to the album Lifetime of memories



Jennifer Bowden - October 16, 2024 at 02:48 PM

RM

“ I was saddened to learn of Ann's passing! I have described her as a kind, gentle spirit as she worked selflessly to make her church and her community a better place. Many, many people who were hospitalized or recovering at home have received a visit from Ann, carrying with her a hand-knitted prayer shawl for them to keep and cherish. She participated in numerous community organizations, and she was ever present at her church--always giving of her time and talent to make life more worthwhile. Indeed, her's was a life well-lived. May she rest in peace, and may God comfort her family during this time of grief.

*With warmest regards,*

*Rev. Bob McLavey  
The Presbyterian Church of Floyd*

---

**Rev. Bob McLavey** - October 16, 2024 at 12:53 PM