



Frances Cochran

November 28, 2021

Frances Cochran passed away on November 28, 2021. She was ninety-four years old. Born in Blacksburg in 1927 to Anna Bowles and Army Sergeant Birman Craig, she was the only child of a poor family, but food was always on the table, she was loved, and she was taught right from wrong. She especially adored her cousin, Sue Dillon. In fact, they were more like sisters who enjoyed such adventures as riding their bikes all the way from town to Lusters Gate to swim among the snakes at a swimming hole. They also loved going to Shirley Temple movies at the Lyric, paying their 5 cents to get in, and very occasionally having enough money for a candy bar too. Frances enjoyed school and was thrilled to be invited to the wedding of her 6th grade teacher, Miss Mary Robeson, to Robert Wood. Frances's teacher honored her excited students with front row seating and a photo of the occasion. Later, she would learn that Wood had been killed, serving his country in World War II. Her 7th grade teacher was Miss Margaret Beeks, who travelled extensively during summers, sending post cards back to students. Frances found her professional calling in high school when she realized how much she liked learning secretarial skills. This led to her work at VPI in the College of Agriculture, and for the rest of her life, she spoke fondly of her bosses, particularly Drs. Wilson Bell and E. P. Johnson. Her life as a young single adult was fun. She now bought clothes downtown on layaway, took voice lessons with Miss Luster, and sang in the Blacksburg Baptist Church choir. In 1950, a young and very good looking master's

candidate in Entomology appeared in Price Hall, Donald G. Cochran. On September 7, 1952, he and Frances were married and headed off to New Brunswick, New Jersey where Don pursued a PhD at Rutgers. Frances loved working as a secretary on campus

and making friends with women of various international backgrounds. She especially enjoyed taking music appreciation with librarian Jolan Szendrey, returning home with her to enjoy her mother's homemade Hungarian pastries. While in New Brunswick, she also attended a poetry reading by Robert Frost. Frances gave birth to Victoria Ann in 1954, and when Dr. James Grayson invited Don to join the Entomology faculty at VPI, the three Cochrans returned to Blacksburg where they lived with Frances's widowed mother on Houston Street. Frances again worked on campus, while her mother, now called "Mamam," took care of Vickie. When Megan Lee was born in 1958, Frances decided to remain home, devoting herself to her family. In 1963, Christopher Craig was born. And in 1964, Frances and Don asked Mamam to come live with

them and their three children in a new home they'd had built. Frances supported Don's two careers, one as a research scientist and the other as an officer in the Army Reserve Medical Corps, from which he eventually retired as a Full Colonel. Frances was a perfectionist when it came to cleaning the house and preparing food, particularly delicious and beautiful desserts, for receptions for Don and his colleagues. Like her father, she was also a top sergeant, barking orders at her children, whom she adored. She served as room mother, scout leader, chaperone, Sunday school piano player, and any other position she could fill to help her children thrive. She drove them and their friends everywhere, encouraging their pursuits. Perhaps more excited than they were when the Beatles arrived on the scene, she raced out to buy the 45 RPM of "I

Want to Hold Your Hand" for them. Later, she especially enjoyed taking Chris to and from Hargrave where he finished high school. She and Don liked playing bridge; Frances considered risk-taking when bidding thrilling, annoying

more than one partner. The couple also liked square dancing. Frances had many dear friends, such as Margaret Grayson, Marilyn Brna, and Virgie Holt. They loved outlet shopping, flower shows, and much more. Frances later drove Virgie and many more friends to cancer treatments. When her own mother's health began going downhill, she devoted herself completely to Anna until she passed away in 1975. Frances, Don, Megan, and Chris travelled to Larmor-Plage, France, in 1984 to attend Vickie and Christian Le Corre's wedding in a medieval Breton church. Don's leaving her in 1987 was devastating, but

Frances bounced back. Her neighbor, Lorraine Potter, befriended her, and they served the Blacksburg Baptist Church in every way they could. They also took aerobics together. In 1992, the family attended Megan and Harris Kinsler's wedding in a lovely Chicago hotel. One of the reasons Frances cherished this occasion was that it allowed her to spend time with her sisters and brothers-in-law, Elna, Verland, Hazel, and Bud. She also loved her nieces and nephews and later enjoyed hearing from them and about their spouses, children, and grandchildren. When Frances's only grandchild, Shannon Frances Christiane, moved from France to Blacksburg with her parents in 1995 when Shannon was seven, the two were inseparable. Frances got to know the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles' movie script and the Spice Girls' lyrics by heart during their

umpteen sleepovers. She also drove Shannon and her friends to basketball, soccer, and other activities. And she looked forward to flying with Shannon and a friend of her choice to spend a week in Chicago with Megan each summer. She was extremely alert mentally and doggedly independent until the end, and she herself arranged to have caregivers come in two to three times a week. When Frances stopped driving, she became a back-seat driver to her helpers, especially to Jo Ann Price, as Frances continued to maintain her car because she never wanted to cause wear and tear to anyone else's vehicle. She also enjoyed keeping her house as spotless and arranged as ever, but

now with the help of her caregivers and her handyman, Tony Bane. More importantly, she concentrated on being contented and grateful. When at eighty, she developed breast cancer, she was very thankful for such drivers as Rosie Ratliff, who took her to radiation treatments. As she got older, she cherished other helpers as well: Martha Repass and Charlene Simpkins. Frances now became fond of watching Hallmark Christmas movies at any time of year, keeping up with the news, balancing her checkbook, and having Daina Aistrop fix her hair each week. She loved talking to Megan daily, speaking with Chris and Rosie regularly, visiting with her beloved Sue D. Elliott and hearing about her family, and visiting with Vickie. She enjoyed Sue, Christian, and Charlene's cooking, and she savored the odd glass of French champagne. She especially looked forward to family Christmases. She is survived by her three children and granddaughter. Frances embraced life, filling it with love, service, and appreciation. She will be much missed. The Blacksburg Baptist Church Senior Pastor, Dr. Tommy McDearis, conducted a comforting service for her at McCoy Funeral Home prior to her cremation. The date of a spring 2022 memorial service will be announced at a future time. Arrangements by McCoy Funeral Home, Blacksburg.