



Gertrude R. Harrington Becker

August 26, 2022

Gertrude “Trudy” R. Harrington Becker, 61, of Blacksburg, VA, passed away peacefully on August 26, 2022 of complications from lung cancer. She is preceded in death by her parents, John T. Harrington, M.D., and Gertrude Rose Harrington. She leaves behind her husband, Andrew Becker, her children and their spouses, Matt and Sarah Becker of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Tim and Elizabeth Becker of Fort Worth, TX, and Trudy Becker of Minneapolis, MN, and three, soon to be four, granddaughters. In addition, she leaves her brothers and sisters and their families, Kathleen and Andrew Clark of Houston, TX, Daniel Harrington of West Roxbury, MA, Ann and Mike Murphy of Westwood, MA, John and Bethany Harrington of Little Compton, RI, Mark and Deanna Harrington of Houston, TX, and Tim and Kelly Harrington of West Roxbury, MA.

Born in Fall River, MA in 1961 and raised in Boston, Trudy was the oldest of seven children. She attended the historic Boston Latin School (Class of 1979) and graduated from the College of the Holy Cross (Class of 1983). Trudy then moved to Chapel Hill, NC, where she earned an M.A. in Classics from UNC Chapel Hill and met Andrew Becker. The two married in the summer of 1987 and moved to Blacksburg, VA, where Trudy earned another M.A., this one in History, from Virginia Tech, and the pair had their three children. Trudy and Andy both joined the Classics program at Virginia Tech and settled in Blacksburg permanently.

A deep commitment to education was a throughline of Trudy's life. She returned to her own education, even after multiple graduate degrees, to earn a Ph.D. in Classics from the University of Florida in 2008 with a dissertation on fragmentary Roman historians. But her scholastic commitment wasn't centered on herself alone. She was dedicated to the education of her three children, and her passion for educational stewardship was displayed over and over in her relationships with her VT students. For them, Trudy was often more than a teacher: she was an advocate, champion, and true mentor. She took her students on, especially first-generation college students or those struggling in their academic and personal lives, and made it her mission to guide them with a stern but supportive hand. Her students felt Trudy's impact long after graduating. Trudy's excellent work in teaching and advising also led to major awards, including Virginia Tech's Wine Award for Excellence in Teaching, Alumni Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Academic Advising, and Alumni Award for Excellence in International Education.

Any of Trudy's relatives can attest that her love for her family was fierce and relentless. As the oldest of seven, she developed a skill for taking care of others from her earliest years and she was intensely protective of anyone she took under her wing. Trudy's tenacious love drove her marriage of 35 years with Andy—he was always her favorite person and best teammate, both at home and in teaching together. She'd say that being with Andy allowed her to be who she wanted to be. And no issue faced by Trudy's three kids was too big or too small for her to take on, to tackle, to try to fix. She was their rock and their inspiration, and her love enabled all three children to flourish.

Trudy's home base was Blacksburg, but over the course of her life she traveled extensively, including visiting more than 20 countries. She'd joke that she wasn't interested in seeing anywhere the Romans didn't go—but still loved visiting places like Myanmar or South Korea. She returned again and

again to the Hummocks in Rhode Island where the Harrington family swam, sailed, tossed rocks, ate chowder, and spent hours talking on the porch every summer of Trudy's life. Across all her travels, her most beloved place was always Rome—the site of her scholastic research and countless meaningful moments with her students, adult tour groups, and her beloved family. A slice of potato pizza, an Aperol spritz, or a short walk to the Colosseum could always bring her a smile.

Trudy loved reading—a trait passed down from her parents. She usually had a mystery novel on hand, and if anyone sent her an article on a topic they loved, there was a good chance she'd have already read it. As an avid sports fan, she rooted fiercely for her teams, from the Hokies and Tar Heels to the Patriots and Red Sox. She was also a dedicated supporter of her kids' favorite teams; visitors to the house on a Saturday morning could invariably find English Premier League games on the TV as Trudy watched intently and utilized every superstition to bring luck to Arsenal and Liverpool. In all these ways she spent her time, Trudy's curiosity, ferocity, tenacity, and humor found ways to burst through.

Trudy especially loved large family gatherings. It was fitting that she passed away in a room crowded with loved ones telling stories around her. Services celebrating Trudy's life will be held at McCoy Funeral Home, 150 Country Club Drive S.W., Blacksburg, VA (Viewing on Thursday, September 1, 2022, 5:00-7:00 p.m.) and St. Mary's Catholic Church, 1205 Old Mill Rd., Blacksburg, VA (Funeral on Friday, September 2, 2022, 2:30 p.m.). Burial immediately following at Westview Cemetery, 723 E. Roanoke St., Blacksburg, VA. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to a scholarship fund for Classical Studies and Study Abroad through VT's History Department here: <https://apps.es.vt.edu/onlinegiving/gift?fund=872667&amount=25.00&frequency=onetime&campaign=AF22401AFH1C700E>

(please select “History Department Annual Fund” and mention Trudy in the “in honor/in memory” section).

Cemetery Details

Westview Cemetery

723 E. Roanoke Street
Blacksburg, VA

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 1. 5:00 AM - 7:00 PM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home
150 Country Club Dr. S.W.
Blacksburg, VA 24060
(540) 552-3211
mccoyfuneralhome@verizon.net
<https://mccoyfuneralhome.com>

Service

SEP 2. 2:30 PM (ET)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
1205 Old Mill Rd
Blacksburg, VA

Tribute Wall

JG

“ I am shocked and saddened to hear of Trudy’s death. It’s been years since I’ve seen her, but I still remember when we first met, when she and Andy came to the CAV meeting at Sweet Briar, and she was the other noticeably pregnant woman there! A few years later I was attending the national meeting for college Honors programs and was so pleased to see Trudy there too - I had MUCH more fun with her there and it was great to catch up. She always struck me as so vital and energetic. She had a full and fortunate life. Solon would have considered her truly happy.
Judy Evans Grubbs

Judith Evans Grubbs - September 08, 2022 at 05:54 PM

SG

“ This woman lifted the life of someone who contributed to mine, so let us remember that the lives touched by someone's life and love are not always known. May her memory be a blessing.

Sam Goodstein - September 05, 2022 at 03:21 PM



“ Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



September 01, 2022 at 09:59 PM

LG

“ *Lea Ann & Rick Grassel purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



Lea Ann & Rick Grassel - September 01, 2022 at 04:27 PM

JF

“ *Jeff Falk purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



Jeff Falk - September 01, 2022 at 08:10 AM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 31, 2022 at 09:34 PM

BW

“ *I'm just devastated by this news. Trudy was my roommate for three years at UNC and I loved her smart funny caring self...my heart is with Andy, Matt, Tim and Trudy and their families. Her impact matches the size of her heart and her intellect and her passion.*

Barbara Wright - August 31, 2022 at 09:14 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 31, 2022 at 09:00 PM



“ *I had the pleasure of getting to know the Beckers during my time in Riva San Vitale with the PGS class of 2015. Getting to know them in Europe and keeping in touch with them once back in Blacksburg are some of my fondest memories of my time in both places. I couldn't help myself from capturing this moment of the two of them on one of our many adventures- it just represents them so perfectly. Dr. HB, you will be so dearly missed. Thank you for touching so many lives during your time on this earth.*



Erin - August 31, 2022 at 08:27 PM



“ *I was a teammate of Matt and Tim at Blacksburg High School and got to meet mrs.becker through her sons and her passing is sad but she is in a better place. Matt and Tim if you guys need anything look me up on Facebook. Nate Calhoun*

Nate Calhoun - August 31, 2022 at 04:06 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 31, 2022 at 11:38 AM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 31, 2022 at 11:07 AM



“ *I watched Trudy grow up from a young age to now and saw what an amazing person she became. This is a tragic loss for this family. She accomplished a lot in her life. She set fine examples for her family and students she will truly be missed but she will remain in our hearts and thoughts forever and never be forgotten. She worked hard all her life now it is time to go fly with the angels.*
Elizabeth TanseyPeavey

Elizabeth Tansey Peavey - August 31, 2022 at 11:00 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 31, 2022 at 10:43 AM

EP

“ Elizabeth Tansey Peavey purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



Elizabeth Tansey Peavey - August 31, 2022 at 10:43 AM

P2

“ PGS, Class of 2018 purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



PGS, Class of 2018 - August 31, 2022 at 09:45 AM



“ Joyful Memory was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



August 31, 2022 at 09:25 AM

JO

“Trudy was one of my oldest and dearest friends in Classics. Smart, funny, lively, and kind, Trudy Harrington Becker was two years behind me at Holy Cross, but was taking advanced Latin and Greek classes from her first term, since she went to what she said was the best high school in Boston for Classics (we would argue about that). A double-major in Classics and History, she wrote a senior thesis on “millennialism” around the year 1000 (“not hats,” she would say, with characteristic wit, not “millinerialism”). She headed to Chapel Hill for grad school and met and married Andy Becker, also an old friend because as a Michigan undergrad he played softball with the graduate students. They were pleased I later won up teaching at UNC. As I talked to her at conferences over the years about teaching and her research, it was easy to see why she would win awards for teaching and leadership, and I often had students read her article on Vergil’s Camilla. I read about and talked to Trudy and Andy about their many study abroad programs, which always sounded terrific, then about 8 years ago when I picked a Rome hotel off the internet for a stay, I was delighted to bump into them there with a group, not just because it was good to see them but because I knew they would pick a good hotel for their students. Twins ran in her family, and I can remember seeing Trudy and Andy at the APA one year with two little ones, then about 18 years later I gave a talk at William and Mary and a pair of handsome twins came up to me and said “I think you know our parents.” One year at an APA reception I introduced her to someone as “my oldest friend in Classics,” then seeing the glint in her eye quickly added, “who curiously looks much much younger than me.” Talking to Trudy about the Virginia Tech shootings revealed her profound feelings of sympathy (Vergil’s “mentem mortalia tangunt”); all sympathy and condolences now to Andy and their large extended families, both biological and academic.

Jim O'Hara - August 31, 2022 at 06:56 AM

MP

*Jim,
The Harrington family feels blessed to call Trudy "ours." She was "awesome." Intense, kind, fun--a wonder. Thank you for your reflection. The Holy Cross Classics Department has lost a treasured alumnae. Trudy was sympathetic to others--their challenges, their "crosses." As I profess every day, "I believe in the communion of saints." I have a new saint to pray to....
Mary Harrington Power*

Mary E Power - August 31, 2022 at 06:09 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 31, 2022 at 12:18 AM

SF

“ *Trudy and I both graduated from BLS in 1979. Her current photo shows her familiar face, bangs, freckles and all. We share in common a dear friend in Elaine K. Sgegilia and I remember her love for the classics. I am honored to learn of her family and the intense love and devotion that she carried throughout her life. Blessings to her entire family as I know that she is deeply missed. A well-lived life and an awesome person. God bless you, Trudy Harrington Becker.*

Shawn E Foreman - August 30, 2022 at 11:51 PM



“ *Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



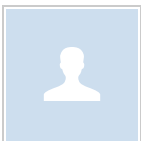
August 30, 2022 at 08:05 PM



“ *I met Trudy soon after she and Andy came to Blacksburg—for what they expected would be a short stay. After scouting around, she decided to go for a master's degree in history, and I directed her thesis. In 1990, just as she was finishing the big paper, I knew that the Appalachian Studies Conference was coming to Blacksburg, and I suggested she present a portion of her work at it. Already clearly an accomplished teacher, and about to be a devoted mother, there she was—standing at the front of the room, nine months pregnant with the twins, confident that she had command of a good story and a fine way to tell it, happily embarking on yet another chapter of her young life.*

Peter Wallenstein

Peter Wallenstein - August 30, 2022 at 06:48 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 30, 2022 at 06:35 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 30, 2022 at 06:25 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.*



August 30, 2022 at 06:17 PM



“ *I'll miss you, Trudy. Thinking of our last memories together (graduation 2018) and remembering you smiling and happy during my final days in Blacksburg. Thank you for always sharing your light.*



Shalini Rana - August 30, 2022 at 05:26 PM

MM

“ Margaret Musgrove purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



Margaret Musgrove - August 30, 2022 at 05:01 PM

JC

“ I remember Trudy with such fondness from my short time at Virginia Tech. She was a woman of great charm, warmth, and intellect. I am so sorry to learn of her passing and send my love to her family.
Jennifer Colosimo

Jennifer Driscoll Colosimo - August 30, 2022 at 04:41 PM

P&

“ Pat & Susan, Emily & Trevor, Jessica & Cole purchased the *Gracious Lavender Basket* for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



Pat & Susan, Emily & Trevor, Jessica & Cole - August 30, 2022 at 02:42 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of Gertrude R. Harrington Becker.



August 30, 2022 at 02:33 PM