



Nancy Payne Curtis

March 9, 2024

Nancy Payne Curtis, 67, of Virginia Beach, Virginia, took her final bow and exited stage left on March 9, 2024, from complications after a fall at home.

Born in Radford, Virginia to Ruth H. and Charles D. Payne, Nancy was a student of dance and piano from early on in life. While a freshman studying music at Bridgewater College in Virginia, a chance encounter with a professor of Communication Studies, Theatre and English changed the course of her life after she was assigned to run the spotlight for a production with The Pinion Players, Bridgewater's student-run theatre organization. Nancy credits that professor, Ralph MacPhail Jr., with teaching her to work with students, not over them. She graduated from Bridgewater with degrees in Music, English, and Theatre. Upon graduation, Nancy wanted to be in a larger metropolitan area which would support a drama program, so she moved to Virginia Beach, Virginia and began teaching at Kempsville Middle School.

At a holiday party later that year was where Nancy met her soulmate, Mark Curtis. The two were married at the Virginia Tech amphitheatre in Blacksburg, Virginia in June 1980 and then made their home in Virginia Beach. Nancy was hired at First Colonial High School in 1981 and later earned master degrees in Humanities, Theatre, and Philosophy from Old Dominion University. Their son, Sky Charles Curtis, was born in August 1988.

Nancy retired from First Colonial High School, Virginia Beach, Virginia in 2022 after 41 years as the drama teacher. During her tenure there, she directed hundreds of shows and left her mark on thousands of students, who not only learned from her how to be better actors and techies, but also better people. She saw her theatre alumni working professionally on Broadway and in national tours, in blockbuster and critically acclaimed films, being nominated for Oscar Awards, and, most importantly, living ordinary, fulfilling lives. In her words, though, “Kind of the whole point of [my art] is that you never see me; you get to see the kids, and they’re the special part of all of this. Making theatre together is really what matters.”

She didn’t stay retired from teaching for very long, and soon became an adjunct professor with the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, instructing students online and occasionally in person, and, most recently, also serving as a recruiter for the school at high school Thespian conferences across the nation. Nancy helped build the Virginia Thespian organization and served as Chapter Director for many years. She was always thrilled with any chance to connect with the fellow artists she had nurtured, and many will miss knowing she was only a phone call or text away.

Her retirement gave Nancy and Mark the chance to see productions in New York, London, and Nevada, to take long trips to Alaska and Canada, and to spend time with cherished friends. Her love for her craft was great, as was her strong need to direct another show, and she had recently helped put together a production crew so she could co-direct at Little Theatre of Virginia Beach, and she was on board to help produce LTVB’s 2024 summer musical with a former student, too.

Nancy is survived by her best friend and devoted husband of more than 40 years, Mark Curtis. She was predeceased by her beloved son, Sky, her parents, her mother-in-law Bernice Curtis, father-in-law Dale Balducci, and

aunts and uncles Helen and Stan Compton, Martha Helms, Harley Helms, Ralph Compton, and Jenny and Bill Burrowbridge, and cousins Ralph Compton and Virginia Burrowbridge.

Nancy is also survived by parents-in-law George Curtis, and Doris Balducci, and her cherished college roommate Mary Pomerson and her husband David. She leaves behind brothers- and sisters-in-law Lynn and Cathy Curtis, Lori and Dean Walls, Forrest and Nancy Curtis, and Craig and Linda Curtis. Cousins Mary Page Payne Compton, Jim Payne, and Donald Compton also survive her. Former co-collaborators and dear friends Tammy and Bob Smith, Vince Bowhers and Pamela Jacobson-Bowhers, Marguerite Alley and wife Jan Melton, and protege Zack Kattwinkel are left behind as well.

Many nieces and nephews survive her: Sarah and Scot Casto, Ryan and Lindsay Burrowbridge, Adam and Sarah Burrowbridge, Steve and Nancy Compton, Gary and Sonja Compton, Jill and Rob Loy, Brian Walls, Russell and Amy Walls, Taylor Walls-Carr, Whitney Walls, Jada and Wayne Fingleton, Chad and Desiree Curtis, John Curtis, Charles and Emily Curtis, James and Chelsea Curtis, Ryan and Crystal Curtis, and Cassandra and Andrew Murray.

Countless students and their parents from The Patriot Playhouse at First Colonial Theatre and Thespian Troupe 3178, and the wider arts community in Virginia Beach are left knowing that the show must go on.

Contributions to establish a scholarship fund in her memory may be donated at givebutter.com/NancyCurtisMemorialScholarshipFund, texting CURTIS to 53-555, or by sending checks made out to Playhouse Partners to Playhouse Partner Treasurer, c/o First Colonial High School, 1272 Mill Dam Rd., Virginia Beach, VA 23454

“Act well your part, there all the honor lies,” – Alexander Pope

Services are in the care of McCoy Funeral Home and Crematory, and will be rendered on Sunday, March 24, 2024, from 1:00- 2:30 PM, in the McCoy Funeral Home Chapel, 150 Country Club Drive S.W., Blacksburg, VA 24060.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

MAR **24**. 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home Chapel
150 Country Club Dr S.W.
Blacksburg, VA 24060