



Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke

June 16, 1927 - December 16, 2020

Maxie Lee Wright Duke (93) passed peacefully in her home with family by her side on December 16, 2020. Born June 16, 1927, in Highlands, NC, Maxie is predeceased by her parents, Charles N. Wright and Helen Cabe Wright Wilson. She was married to the late Albert A. Duke, Sr., and is survived by a brother - Josh Wilson (Pat) of Belton; children - Susan Clarkson (Greg) of Highlands, NC, Margaret Powell of Seneca, Albert A Duke Jr. (Becky) of Walhalla, Alisa Gunter (Dennis) of Landrum and Mary Helen Duke of Tampa, FL. She is “Granny Duke” to her grandchildren – Holly Vanhorn (John), Alexis Keating (Robin), Jonathan Clarkson (Kayla), JD Powell (Kerri), Amanda Powell, Chris Gunter (April), Barak Gunter (Megan), Kaleb Gunter and Carter Duke and “GIGI” to her great grandchildren – Jackson Vanhorn, Samhradh and Lana Keating, Benjamin, Emily and Matthew Clarkson, Jack, Tucker and Hampton Powell, Claire Gunter and Max Gunter.

Passionate about hard work, education, service, and the political process, Maxie led a full and productive life. She earned an undergraduate degree from Western Carolina Teacher’s College and a Master’s Degree in Education from Clemson University. Taking a leave from teaching while raising her children, Maxie worked alongside Albert at Duke’s Economy Drugs in Walhalla but then returned to teaching in the Oconee County School System, where she retired from Walhalla Senior High in 1989. With her commitment to education, Maxie’s early years of service to her community and state included being

elected to the Oconee County School Board and appointed to the South Carolina State School Board.

A few years prior to her retirement, Maxie and her longtime friend, Sid Ballenger (deceased), took to the trails on the weekends and sought to find and photograph every waterfall in Oconee County. In 1983 they published "Some Waterfalls, Cascades and Shoals in Oconee County" and made many presentations to local church and civic groups showcasing their efforts.

Always the activist, Maxie and a group of ladies instigated a petition and acquired enough signatures to travel and present a request to the Governor of South Carolina and, as a result, Highway 28 between Walhalla and Seneca was straightened and widened. Maxie considered herself a "Yellow Dog Democrat" and worked tirelessly over the years for national, state, and local Democratic Party candidates. Highlights of her efforts were attending the inauguration of Bill Clinton in 1993 and being inducted into the South Carolina Democratic Women's Hall of Fame in 2007.

Not wanting to let any grass grow under her feet, Maxie and a group of volunteers banded together to preserve and save the historic Walhalla Graded School building. The Walhalla Auditorium Restoration Committee (WARC) was formed. The committee held numerous fundraisers and asked the community for donations which lead to the Walhalla Civic Auditorium opening in 2003. Today, Walhalla Performing Arts Center (WPAC) is a vibrant part of Walhalla and Oconee County and provides a wide variety of entertainment.

Upon learning that an historic church building was to be moved outside of Walhalla, Maxie once again gathered volunteers and formed a group to "Save Old St. John's Church." Fundraising and grant writing commenced, and the church was dedicated in its new location in September 2014 at the Walhalla Depot as Old St. John's Meeting House, a venue for weddings and community

gatherings.

Maxie's local achievements were recognized several times. In 2000, Walhalla held its sesquicentennial and, as a part of the celebration, Maxie was named First Lady of Walhalla. In September 2007, Governor Mark Sanford awarded Maxie the Order of the Silver Crescent for her significant contributions, leadership, volunteerism, and lifelong influence within Walhalla and Oconee County.

Her most recent accomplishment was authoring *Charlie and Helen-Chronicles of Love, Heroism and Persistence*. Published in 2019, the book details her family history through stories and photographs.

The family wishes to thank those most faithful to our mother over the years while she was still able to be at home, Della Wright and Gloria Cleveland.

Due to COVID restrictions, a private family service will be held and burial will be in Highlands Memorial Cemetery. Memorials can be made to St. Luke United Methodist Church – Forward Fund - (607 E. Main Street, Walhalla, SC 29691), where Maxie was a member or to Prisma Health Hospice of the Foothills (Attn: Foundation Office, 298 Memorial Drive, Seneca, SC 29672).

Cemetery Details

Highlands Memorial Park

Memorial Park Dr
Highlands, NC 28741

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*

January 28, 2023 at 01:03 PM



“ *Scott & Rachel Parris lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Scott & Rachel Parris - January 12, 2021 at 01:31 AM



“ *Larry And Wanda Laye Harden lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Larry and Wanda Laye Harden - January 11, 2021 at 10:24 PM



“ *Kathy Addis lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Kathy addis - December 26, 2020 at 09:28 AM

KA

“ So sorry for your loss. Prayers for all the family 🙏🙏🙏



Kathy addis - December 26, 2020 at 09:26 AM

DL

“ Ms Maxie Duke was my teacher in 1985 & 1986. I remember her bringing our class to her house for Christmas one year. We had the best time. She was a very loyal & dedicated friend to my cousin the Late Michael Evatt. They shared their love of politics together. She will be truly missed.

Donna Lusk - December 21, 2020 at 09:16 PM

CO

“ Mrs. Duke taught me at Walhalla. (Class of 1983) She was an awesome teacher. She could listen with a kind ear and teach with a steady and stern demeanor. You knew she cared about your future and what you needed to reach your goals.



Carrie Burnside Orr - December 21, 2020 at 12:06 AM

BD

“ Bobbie Duncan lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Bobbie Duncan - December 20, 2020 at 07:33 PM

LM

“ *Maxie is a kindred Spirit in her passion to save what is important. It was a blessing to know her. May peace and comfort surround you all. Eddie and Lynne Martin*



Lynne Martin - December 20, 2020 at 07:23 PM

NE

“ *Nell lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Nell - December 20, 2020 at 12:26 PM

KB

“ *Kristy Blair Billingsley lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Kristy Blair Billingsley - December 20, 2020 at 02:17 AM

RB

“ *Maxie was a good neighbor and a good friend. She has certainly earned her eternal place in Heaven (and is probably organizing projects there!). I am one of many who will miss her greatly.*



Rosemary Bailes - December 19, 2020 at 11:14 PM

TH

“ Tammy Haley lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Tammy Haley - December 19, 2020 at 09:40 PM



“ Eleanor McGuire lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Eleanor McGuire - December 19, 2020 at 12:32 PM



“ Maxie was one of my mother (Elsie Simpson's) dearest friends and Maxie, my mother and my daughter Kris McGuire went with Maxie to the 1993 inauguration and had a fabulous time. She had more drive than a dozen people put together. When she made up her mind to get something done, she took over. I have so much respect for this remarkable lady. To all of her family and friends I give my heartfelt sympathy. There will never be another like her, she did her best to make this world a better place. I say " A job well done Maxie".

Eleanor McGuire - December 19, 2020 at 12:31 PM

BL

“ *Burgess (Bird) Laye lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Burgess (Bird) Laye - December 19, 2020 at 12:26 PM

RS

“ *Ray T Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Ray T Smith - December 19, 2020 at 12:09 PM

JC

“ *What a role model she was for this young girl oh so many years ago, Rest in Peace. Joanie Miller Clute*

Joanie Miller Clute - December 19, 2020 at 10:58 AM

JS

“ *Johnathan Scott Strength lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Johnathan Scott Strength - December 19, 2020 at 06:55 AM

RT

“ *Reg Tatum lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Reg Tatum - December 18, 2020 at 11:37 PM

WT

“ *Maxie was always so passionate and determined if she knew it would improve the town or help in any way and she would stand up and fight for change. She stood up for the cause. She played such an important role in the restoration of Walhalla and the preservation of its history. In a personal note, she and Albert raised their children to never look down on others .. they were raised to be compassionate just as they were I remember Christmas being special for me and my siblings because of Maxie and Albert. I never saw her or spoke with her by phone without her asking about each of my siblings in a caring manner. Hal, Susan, Margaret, Lisa and Mary Helen your mother was a very knowledgeable and kind person who always spoke highly of her children and doted over her grands. I pray for you to feel comfort and have precious memories of your mom. Bless you all!*

Wanda Ray Thomas - December 18, 2020 at 09:41 PM

AR

“ *Alvin Rochester lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Alvin Rochester - December 18, 2020 at 07:08 PM

BW

“ If there was anyone who was more dedicated to family and community, I'd like meet that person. Aunt Maxie served as matriarch to her extended family, of which I am proud to be a member. Her passing is a loss to so many, but she has earned her rest. Thank you for many great memories.

Buddy Watson - December 18, 2020 at 06:37 PM

WJ

“ Wanda Addis Justus lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Wanda Addis Justus - December 18, 2020 at 05:19 PM

SA

“ Sherry,Randy And Matt Abbott lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Sherry,Randy and Matt Abbott - December 18, 2020 at 05:09 PM

RB

“ Renee Butts lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Renee Butts - December 18, 2020 at 04:44 PM

MA

“ To the Duke family,
It was heartbreaking for me to learn of Maxie's passing. She was truly a woman of high standard, loved her family, loved Oconee and the State of SC. She will greatly be missed by so many. Maxie invited me to attend with her to one of the South Carolina Beauty Pageants. I will never forget it. It was a highlight of my life and being with her was truly a blessing. God bless each of her children and grandchildren. You had a wonderful mother and are so blessed to have had her these many years. She was dedicated, loyal, and loving to all the causes she supported. She definitely loved her family as she spoke of you often. Our deepest condolences to each of you.
LC and Mary Jo McCoy Alexander



Mary Alexander - December 18, 2020 at 03:39 PM

MO

The family of Nob and Roxie Oglesby(OSBY) would like to wish their condolences to the Duke family. My mother Roxie and Maxie was always the best of friends during they time on earth. I know Roxie is waiting on her in Heaven. We love you and will always miss you.

Matthew Oglesby and family

Matthew Oglesby - December 19, 2020 at 09:39 AM

MS

“ Maxie will be missed by all who knew her and in the community. Love and prayers to the family.



Melody Shealy - December 18, 2020 at 01:53 PM

LL

“ *Larry & Martha LeCroy lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Larry & Martha LeCroy - December 18, 2020 at 01:52 PM

HM

“ *HEATHER MARTIN lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



HEATHER MARTIN - December 18, 2020 at 01:18 PM

RS

“ *Ray T Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Ray T Smith - December 18, 2020 at 01:01 PM

GS

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Glenna Sansone - December 18, 2020 at 12:48 PM

TS

“ *Ted & Rae Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Ted & Rae Smith - December 18, 2020 at 11:17 AM

RS

“ *Rae And Ted Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*

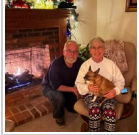


Rae and Ted Smith - December 18, 2020 at 10:42 AM

RL

“ *The family of Bobby L. Long (deceased, former teacher, coach and Principal of Walhalla Elementary School) send loving thoughts and good memories to each of the family members of Maxie Duke. It didn't take us long after coming to Walhalla from Presbyterian College in the summer of 1959, to be met and greeted by Albert and Maxie! More of the people of Oconee County who welcomed us, encouraged us, gave us room to grow and supported us in the dark times. God bless, comfort and give each of you Peace. Angela, Tim, Ben, Donna, Hannah, (Josh), Turner (Ki), and Maggie*

Robert Long - December 18, 2020 at 10:38 AM



“ *Susan Crane lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Susan Crane - December 18, 2020 at 10:23 AM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke.*



December 18, 2020 at 10:21 AM



“ *Rae & Ted Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Rae & Ted Smith - December 18, 2020 at 09:51 AM

LT

“ *Some of our best memories of Maxie happened when she introduced us to her Uncle Henry Wright in Highlands and the many stories she told on the first trip there and the trips that followed. A few times we came very close to the ditches because the driver was laughing so much. Her knowledge of plants native to this region was something she shared over and over. A couple of the excursions to the waterfalls with her and Sid were too much for me to enjoy but not wanting to miss their stories, I trekked on listening to every word. The many letters she wrote to the editors of local papers were a source of pride for those of us whose thinking was likewise. She was a staunch lady who did not fear calling out the wrongs being done around her. WE have always and will always be proud that she could put so much meaning into the words she chose. We have lost a dear friend whose presence was a joy. Maxie was Maxie! WE are better for having known her.*

Hal, Becky, Carter and the rest of the Duke family we send our love and thanks for sharing her with the world.

*Praying for all,
Clarence & Louise L Towe*



Louise Towe - December 18, 2020 at 09:39 AM

CP

“ *Maxie was a friend for many years. Our families shared many good times together.*



Cornelia Smith Pepper - December 18, 2020 at 09:18 AM

LH

“ *Sending prayers of love and comfort to the Duke family during your time of grief and celebration for your loved one.*

*Lynn and Lennie McCoy Hughes
York, SC*



Lennie Hughes - December 18, 2020 at 08:01 AM

JB

“ *Jeannie And Jimmy Barkrt lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



jeannie and jimmy barkrt - December 18, 2020 at 04:26 AM

NC

“ *Nell Cantrell lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Nell Cantrell - December 18, 2020 at 12:05 AM

LR

“ *Lula Reid lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Lula Reid - December 18, 2020 at 12:02 AM

NG

“ *NANCY GOEHLE lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



NANCY GOEHLE - December 17, 2020 at 10:56 PM

TS

“ *Teresa Sills lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Teresa Sills - December 17, 2020 at 09:11 PM

AD

“ *Mrs. Duke was a very special friend and mentor to my brother Mike. I can see them dancing in Heaven now. Prayers for the Duke family. My condolences. ~ Anita Evatt Dost and family*



Anita Evatt Dost - December 17, 2020 at 09:04 PM

IN

“ *I was honored to have known Maxie. She loved her church and community dearly. She will be in my thoughts and prayer. Many condolences to the Duke family.*



irene Nivens - December 17, 2020 at 08:56 PM

BL

“ *Bobbie Ledford lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Bobbie Ledford - December 17, 2020 at 08:54 PM

AW

“ *Condolences to the family of the lovely Maxie Duke! She was a wonderful friend and lady who will surely be missed!*



Angelia Winn - December 17, 2020 at 08:36 PM

BK

“ *Maxie was always a presence in my life, and later ours, once Pixie joined the family, and if she was around, the place was always a little brighter. I have two special memories.*

The first was when Maxie decided that I would take over organizing the August decoration up at the Wilson Cemetery. She didn't ask, but just told me, as gently as possible, that I had the job and she'd be happy to help. Nobody ever said "no" to Maxie.

Maxie and my mother Hazel were great friends, and when mom died, some of her ashes were scattered on Maxie's cabin's land, close to Hazel's. That was the only time I ever saw Maxie tear up.

I loved talking politics with Maxie, and used to tease her as being "The Last Living Democrat in Walhalla, South Carolina." The last time I remember saying it, though, she grinned and said "No, there's one more.. I think." A great, sophisticated, smart, loving lady, and we will miss her forever.

Bob Killebrew - December 17, 2020 at 08:28 PM

MO

“ *Monica Ballenger Oliver lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Monica Ballenger Oliver - December 17, 2020 at 08:11 PM

FD

“ Thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. Thankful your family enjoyed Maxie for so many years. She will be missed!
Ben and Faith Davis



Faith Davis - December 17, 2020 at 08:03 PM

AP

“ so sorry for you loss. Ms. Duke was a wonderful lady and a great asset to Walhalla. She loved her town and did so much for it she will be missed for sure.

Annette Pace - December 17, 2020 at 07:54 PM

RO

“ Lisa and family, so sorry to hear this. Prayers for comfort, grace, and peace for you all. God bless. -Ronnie Hucks

Ronnie - December 17, 2020 at 07:26 PM

WS

“ Wayne & Peggy Sibbett lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Wayne & Peggy Sibbett - December 17, 2020 at 07:19 PM

DS

“ *Dave & Donna Stephens lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Dave & Donna Stephens - December 17, 2020 at 06:47 PM

LB

“ *I always admired Maxie as a woman of both great charm and character after working with Becky Duke and knowing Hal through Becky. We need more like Maxie!*

Laura Black - December 17, 2020 at 06:24 PM

RS

“ *Rae & Ted Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Rae & Ted Smith - December 17, 2020 at 05:28 PM

MS

“ *Sending love and prayers.*



Mary Stoudemire Sprouse - December 17, 2020 at 05:21 PM

BJ

“ *Becky Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Becky Johnson - December 17, 2020 at 05:10 PM

SM

“ *Sherry Rogers Moore sent a virtual gift in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Sherry Rogers Moore - December 17, 2020 at 04:50 PM

DA

“ *Don And Darlene Albertson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Don and Darlene Albertson - December 17, 2020 at 04:48 PM

JH

“ *Jim And Runelle Hall lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Jim and Runelle Hall - December 17, 2020 at 04:42 PM

RA

“ Rod, Katherine & Kristy Albertson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Rod, Katherine & Kristy Albertson - December 17, 2020 at 04:33 PM



“ Audrey Agatha Barker lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Audrey Agatha Barker - December 17, 2020 at 04:30 PM

JJ

“ As a friend for many years, my heart breaks with Maxie's passing. She was such a hard worker and I enjoyed working on the auditorium board with Maxie and supporting her many endeavors. She is leaving a wonderful legacy for her children and grands. My thoughts and prayers are with you all!



Juanita Burrell Johns - December 17, 2020 at 04:22 PM

SV

“ Maxie was a fine lady and was always so much fun. Condolences to all her family.



Sylvia and Red Vaughn - December 17, 2020 at 04:16 PM

ID

“ *Dennis & Iris Duncan lit a candle for Mrs. Maxie Wright Duke*



iris duncan - December 17, 2020 at 04:04 PM

RM

“ *I remember the day of our luncheon at Walhalla High when Maxie was retiring and she read a poem that she wrote. She talked about how excited she was that she would never have to wear panty hose ever again! What a character!*



Rhonda Miller - December 17, 2020 at 04:01 PM



We read her "Ode to Panty Hose" at her service. We miss her very much.

Margaret Powell - December 29, 2020 at 08:34 PM

RK

“ *Rhonda Tucker Kilby lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Rhonda Tucker Kilby - December 17, 2020 at 02:45 PM

GN

“ GREG AND CATHIE NOWELL lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



GREG AND CATHIE NOWELL - December 17, 2020 at 02:23 PM

LM

“ Prayers to the family, at this time of need. The McCoy-Couch family



Loneise McCoy-Couch - December 17, 2020 at 01:59 PM

DN

“ Maxie was a special lady and will be missed!
Deepest sympathy, love and prayers to all the family!
Doug and Linda Reese Nix



Doug and Linda Reese Nix - December 17, 2020 at 01:58 PM

JW

“ Jeanette Wilson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Maxie Lee Wright Duke



Jeanette Wilson - December 17, 2020 at 01:54 PM

LP

“ *Lisa Peden lit a candle in memory of Mrs.
Maxie Lee Wright Duke*



Lisa Peden - December 17, 2020 at 01:44 PM