Virginia Bryan Borts

October 27, 1928 - December 16, 2020

Virginia Bryan Borts passed away peacefully at her home on December 16, 2020 at the age of 92. She was born on October 27, 1928, in Detroit, Michigan. Virginia was the daughter of Jesse and Ruth Bryan and is survived by her sister Mary Jane Bryan Hewitt and sister in law Judy Bryan along with numerous nieces and nephews. Virginia is predeceased by her husband Wallace, and siblings Jessie Murdoch (James), Marcia Boone (John), Bessie Kamerer (Al), and Richard Bryan (Judy).

Virginia inspired generations of students while teaching English, Speech, and Drama for 37 years at Southfield High School. She was the first teacher in the state of Michigan to put on a high school musical theater play and so Virginia was recognized in the Michigan Teachers' Hall of Fame. Her teaching included traveling children's theater and major productions including musicals, comedies and dramas annually, as well as engaging in the State-wide Forensic Play competitions. It was no surprise that Virginia was honored as the Outstanding Teacher of Performing Arts Students for the State of Michigan.

Virginia cared deeply for family, kids, the community, and had a special love of dogs. She was quick to get involved in supporting others. She was very active in her church, the Royal Oak First United Methodist Church, and could be found at many events, from the choir, to fish fry events, sack lunch program,

and numerous committees. Her church truly was a passion area for her.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Leader Dogs for the Blind of Michigan, or the American Diabetes Association.

A socially distanced visitation will be held from 2-8pm on January 2, 2021 at the Sullivan and Son funeral home, 705 W. Eleven Mile Road, Royal Oak, Michigan, 48067.

A memorial service will be planned at a future date. Share a memory at www.SullivanFuneralDirectors.com.

Cemetery Details

Roseland Park Cemetery

29001 Woodward Avenue
(NW corner of 12 Mile and Woodward)
Berkley, MI 48072

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN **2**. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Directors-Royal Oak
705 W. Eleven Mile Road
Royal Oak, MI 48067
(248) 541-7000
royal@sullivanfh.com
https://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com/

Tribute Wall

Lorin Subar - Class of '79.

I was so sad to hear of the passing of Va-Borts today. But that sadness was lifted a great measure when I read of the many memories shared by so many whose lives were touched by her presence. I still cannot watch The Music Man or hear that music without thinking about her coaching us on the proper way to bounce while on the train pulling into River City. May your name be for a blessing.

Lorin Subar - August 13, 2021 at 12:26 PM

JB

Joëlle Bochner, class of 1987
Mrs. B picked me out of her Speech class and insisted that I take her theater classes. For the next 3 years, I was in her classes, in her shows and continued what began with her as a lifelong love of theater. She was an inspiration to my life and I will never forget how she came back to direct our senior musical, even though she had retired.
For every opening night since, I have used her Oscar Hammerstein II quote to open a production.
It ends with:
"And love in your heart wasn't put there to stay. Love isn't love till you give it away."

Joëlle Bochner - January 03, 2021 at 03:59 PM

Just learned of Mrs. Va-Borts' passing, and am saddened that I didn't get to see her once more before her passing. Kind mentor, she really made each one of us feel like a star with value. Thank you for the lovely memories and for making us feel so valued!

Diane Holt - August 02, 2021 at 09:00 PM

JT

Ms Borts was so much more than a teacher. She guided us with kindness and compassion and a firm look when we acted too silly or got out of line. She was there for me during a very rough time in my life and her words of wisdom have followed me my whole life. Anyone who knew her will say she was one in a million. Rest In Peace VB. ❤️

Jenifer Thomas - January 03, 2021 at 11:12 AM

SR

Dear Borts Family,

"Our Mrs. Borts" was a teacher's teacher who understood that education was more than classroom academics. She was a blend of expertise and exuberance, sassy and classy. I have such fond memories of extra-curricular theater at Southfield High,made even fonder with the knowledge of how many generations of students she instructed, conducted and mentored.

With great affection,
Stephen (Steve) Rosenbaum
SHS '71
srosenbaum@law.berkeley.edu

Stephen A. Rosenbaum - January 02, 2021 at 04:36 PM

JM

Ginny,
You were the best Godmother a girl could dream of having. You shared your love of musical theater with me, antique collecting, as well as your love for Animals and baking. I'll never forget all the songs you taught susie and me. I'll never forget all of our trips and adventures. More importantly, I'll never ever forget you your fun loving sense of humor, and how you touched my life. Rest in peace my sweet angel. Love always, Jen

Jennifer Murray - January 02, 2021 at 01:31 PM

FS

Thank you, Ginny, for all the years of lemon bars, cookies and other treats. You were the best neighbor one could ever hope to have. May you rest in peace. Tim & Frank

Frank Selinsky - January 02, 2021 at 11:29 AM

JS

Mrs. Borts made magic happen and she instilled the confidence in her students to step beyond our comfort zone and reach for the stars! She taught with passion and instilled inspiration! Those High School theater experiences were life changing for so many of us!

Because of those early theater experiences with "VaBorts", as we called her, I became a professional storyteller and perform mostly for kids. I never would have taken that path without her!

But, it was on October day in 11th grade that stands out for me. My uncle had died and it was the first death I had experienced. Backstage, in her office, her comforting words help me deal with that loss!

Much love and God's speed Mrs. Bots! You touched many!

Jenifer Strauss, former student - January 02, 2021 at 08:47 AM

Mrs. Borts poured her heart and soul into teaching drama at SHS, and the wonderful productions that resulted were evidence of that. But even more so, Mrs. Borts made the theater an oasis for the geeky, awkward teenager that I was. Amid the challenging and angsty world which was high school, Mrs. Borts created a safe and welcoming place where I felt I belonged. What a gift! Thank you Mrs. Borts!

Deborah Hubbard - January 01, 2021 at 05:27 PM

AS

"Love in your heart wasn't put there to stay
Love isn't love till you give it away."

- Oscar Hammerstein II

Cited by Mrs. Borts as a life tenet
and invoked in the life she led

A former student - January 01, 2021 at 03:47 PM

MZ

It was opening night of my senior year musical and I had one of the leads. As my first cue approached, I started to have a panic attack, irrationally becoming more and more convinced I could never remember all of those lines, I'd forget one, then all of them, and I'd be stuck on stage forever, line-less and thus voiceless, while everyone laughed at me until the end of time.

In this haze of anxiety, as I could hear my first cue was only a few seconds away, and in full costume including a big bass drum, I started to drift out the exit stage left, to escape into the school hallway. Suddenly I felt a firm arm grab me by the back of my costume, spin me around, and launch me forward, stumbling, onto the stage...precisely on cue. Even the stumble worked.

Her instincts were sterling. And she never lost her composure.

Wishing a blessed journey to the unique and unforgettable Ginny Borts.

Marshall Zweig - January 01, 2021 at 11:55 AM

EH

Mrs. Borts (sorry, I can't call her anything but that) was one of the most impactful teachers I had during my schooling and who was part of creating my favorite memories of High School. She was such a caring, dedicated, funny, passionate, intelligent human being and instructor. Being in her office, or the auditorium at Southfield High School which was an extension of her office, was like a refuge from the rest of the world. She created an open, accepting, caring environment that so many people thrived in. Whether in class, working on Forensic One-Act productions, or the annual Fall Play or Spring Musical, there was an energy that was palpable in all that participated. The family she created is one that fostered relationships I still have to this day...some of the closest friendships I have. Make no mistake, Mrs. Borts could be quite strict, but always for a reason that ultimately was for the student's benefit. She was truly a rarity and a gift to those who were fortunate enough to have her as a teacher, friend, or in most instances, both.

Edward Hogikyan

Edward Hogikyan - December 31, 2020 at 06:12 PM

KH

Ginny was a caring, gentle, kind lady that I am thankful to have met while out walking my dog Webster. I wish I had met her decades earlier to hear more stories of her students and her life. We shared a love for our furry friends! I did get her Bourbon dogs recipe, which I understand was a family favorite. I will remember her bright smile always. Karen Henkel

Karen Henkel - December 31, 2020 at 01:13 PM

SG

One of the ironies of life is that Virginia Borts never had any children of her own. In 1968, after our production of "South Pacific", a group of her students made a plan to mark a tribute to our favorite teacher. With her husband's permission, we showed up at 6am on Mother's Day, and planted two rose bushes beside her home. Then we woke her to tell her how much she meant to us, and that she would have roses every Mother's Day from then on.
For more than 50 years I called Mrs. Borts on Mother's Day. Never missed one! I also saw her on my infrequent visits to Michigan. Often she would try to get me to call her Ginny, but I could never quite do that. It was a respect thing, I guess.
She followed my career in the professional theatre… a career that she was significant in encouraging. Several times she asked me to visit her classes and do a performance followed by a Q & A. This was a great joy for me, as I also followed in her footsteps to teach. I only know a few of her students that went into the Arts, I'm sure there were many… but that's not what we got from Mrs. Borts. She taught us teamwork. She taught us to support one another. She taught us to work hard — and above all that we should have fun doing whatever we chose to do! She taught this by example!

On this sad December day, in an awful month, in the worst year in memory, we are also saying good-bye to someone who meant the world to me… to us. TIME… when you make your list of good people — people who should be remembered and respected for what is most cherished in the human soul — put an A+ next to the name of Virginia Borts. I will miss you, my friend.

Stan Gill

Stan Gill - December 30, 2020 at 11:49 AM

GM

Virginia “Ginny” Borts was a teacher for ALL ages. Her love of theater, music and drama was infused in every student, audience and faculty member she encountered. Her sharp wit, careful timing and unpredictable playfulness could not go unnoticed.

I shall always value my extracurricular time during my teaching years involved with Play Production Staff. Ginny will surely enjoy years and years of curtain calls in the collective memory of those whose lives she touched.

Fondly,

Gayle Maudlin

Gayle Maudlin - December 29, 2020 at 07:19 PM

Thomas Hewitt

2 files added to the tribute wall

Thomas Hewitt - December 28, 2020 at 05:31 PM

PD

I was lucky to be a part of the "King and I", "Finian's Rainbow" and "Showboat" years, and learned oceans from Mrs. Borts about directing and performing. Both have been a major part of my adult life, and every single show I've directed, she has been whispering loving advice in my ear. Sometimes telling me gently that I'm being an idiot, that voice has been with me over 50 years. Her indomitable spirit -- during "Showboat" she broke her leg skiing, and barely missed a beat getting the show up and running-- and her wisdom will stay with us all. Take a bow, Mrs. B.
Pam Pavlik Dundas

Pamela Dundas - December 28, 2020 at 04:30 PM

SG

Mrs. Borts was my favorite teacher. She was caring, funny, wise, intelligent and beloved by all her students. I was lucky enough to be involved in Camelot, Hello Dolly and Annie Get Your Gun. She was an amazing woman.

Susie Garber-Goldberg - December 28, 2020 at 10:59 PM

EH

4 files added to the album Tribute Wall

Emily Hewitt - December 28, 2020 at 02:44 PM

JC

I am so grateful not only to the guidance and wisdom that Mrs. Borts provided but also the joyous space she created for all of us - a place within a crazy high school experience where we could feel safe and free to be who we were. The Dunlop family took Mrs. Borts on a trip to Chicago a few years ago to see alum Rosie Abdoo in a show, and we still talk today of what fun that trip was, singing in the car with Mrs. Borts. What a creative and joyous force of nature she was! - Jenny (Dunlop) Correia

Jenny (Dunlop) Correia - December 28, 2020 at 09:18 AM

AS

How wonderful that you did this with her.

A former student - January 01, 2021 at 03:51 PM

LM

When I went to SHS in the late 1970s, my name was Linda Dunlop and Mrs. Borts was one of the best parts of my high school experience. One of my favorite memories was just five years ago, when she joined my family on a trip to Chicago to see Rosie Abdoo in her I ncredible one woman show. We walked all over Chicago and Mrs. Borts never tired and was just as lively and sassy as ever. Do much laughter! I will always remember how she took me under her wing and had faith in me. I will miss my dear friend.

Linda Meloche - December 28, 2020 at 09:14 AM

SR

I have only fond memories of being Virginia Bort's student at SHS in drama courses, and I will always treasure working with her in many fall plays and spring musicals. RIP

Susan Rosenbaum, class or 1974

Suan Rosenbaum - December 27, 2020 at 10:08 PM

DS

SHS Class of '62: As I told some of my classmates, Mrs. Borts was the prototype of a now-appreciated "firm-love" with me in H.S. She would call me down on my shenanigans, but in a nice, compassionate way. I'm sure I'm a better person for it some 58 years later. She will be a welcome member of our "next life."

Dennis Stacey - December 27, 2020 at 04:57 PM

PV

Southfield HS student--class of 59--Ms Borts was my English teacher. I loved her for her caring, her humor, her support. She got kids into the language and literature. Fond memories and condolences to her family, which includes her many students. Philip Vestevich

philip vestevich - December 27, 2020 at 04:33 PM

AW

For three years of high school in the early 1960s, Ginny Borts stood at the center of my adolescent life. The school musicals were major events (our huge auditorium sold out multiple performances), and the friendships made in those musicals have lasted a lifetime. We invited Ginny to a reunion fifty years later in North Carolina (did we ever get comfortable not calling her Mrs. Borts?) and she came, her spirits high and her feisty humor undimmed. It's hard to believe the final curtain has fallen.

Allen Wilcox - December 27, 2020 at 04:14 PM

AG

What can anyone say about Ginny that everyone who ever met her wouldn’t say? She was wise, warm, decent, considerate, funny, generous, and so very loving. I have been in contact with her throughout the years since I graduated from SHS. Like so many other kids she directed and taught, I carry with me so much of her wisdom. I also carry her spirit, that is observable in the image, below, that I took during our drama group's Senior trip to New York, which she chaperoned with the wonderful Gayle Maudlin. As I wrote in the Christmas card I sent to Ginny several weeks ago, I am so often reminded of how grateful I feel for the influence she's had in my life.

At this very sad time, I hope her surviving family members will find comfort in these words.

Alan Goodwin

Alan Goodwin - December 27, 2020 at 03:40 PM

DA

Last January 20th, as part of the history of Lathrup Village I am writing, I was honored to tape an interview with Mrs. Borts. I am a 1967 graduate of Southfield High School. I came to know Mrs. Borts as a leading light in the SHS drama department in which I participated. The musicals Mrs. Borts directed were of a standard that led to national recognition for SHS's drama program and an invitation to present the school's 1965 production of The Sound of Music at a theatre in the Masonic Temple in Detroit. Mrs. Borts combined professionalism with a deep affection for her students. On the day of our interview, Mrs. Borts presented me with her 1967 scrapbook of the SHS play, Teahouse of the August Moon, and musical for that year, The Music Man. Reading the myriad tributes in the scrapbook sent to Mrs. Borts by her students past and present at the time, one cannot help but be impressed by the extent to which she influenced their lives. That scrapbook is now one of my most treasured possessions.

Like my family, Mrs. Borts and her husband were old time Lathrup Village residents. She was therefore a repository of happy memories about our beloved Lathrup Village community. During our interview, we touched upon her decision to move to Lathrup. Her affection for her community equaled her commitment to the teaching profession she served so well.

Mrs. Borts was the embodiment of all that a good teacher and a good neighbor should be. She will be sorely missed but always fondly remembered by all of those whose lives she touched.

My deepest sympathy to the members of her family.

Diane Anderson

diane anderson - December 27, 2020 at 12:03 PM

SC

Mrs. Borts was such a force in my last years at Southfield High. She totally believed in her students and made learning fun. I was lucky to be in at least 3 of her classes and peripherally involved in her outstanding stage productions. I'll never forget her smushing her face on the glass of the entry door before entering a classroom. Who else would have been able to maintain her dignity after making that perfect fishfaced move? I think she loved us and I know we loved her back.

SHARON JENKINS CLAYTON - December 27, 2020 at 01:20 PM

LS

A genuinely kind and good person, an inspiring teacher, a talented theatre director... she gave so much to so many.
Linda Schmid

Linda Schmid - December 27, 2020 at 03:42 PM

SM

I found out this very sad news, just a day ago. So I can only echo what's already been said. I wish that I could have thanked her again, in person, for just how much she helped to shape my life. I know that we all feel that way. So lets thank her, by continuing to be decent compassionate human beings, and treating others the way we wish to be treated. What a privilege it is for all of us to have known her. Love you for always Mrs. Borts.

Former Student

Scott Mahon - January 09, 2021 at 01:58 PM