



## Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist

November 29, 1941 - July 1, 2022

### DONNA LORRAINE BRUCKHART-VARNER-SECRIST

Donna was born November 29th 1941 in Harrisburg PA to Chester Hayes Bruckhart and Myrle Romaine Barr-Bruckhart. Her Dad Chester was a life-long steel-worker and union organizer. Her mother Myrle was a homemaker and later in life a shoe factory-worker. Donna placed her hand into the hand of her Savior on July 1st; 2022. Donna was raised in a community in Harrisburg called Shipoke by her parents and grandparents; along with her brother Kenneth Richard (Dick) Bruckhart. Her grandfather was Burchard Hayes Bruckhart; and her grandmother was Clara E. Kauffman-Bruckhart. Donna had a special relationship with her grandfather; and spoke life-long of the special checkerboard he carved for her. She looked forward to playing checkers with her Pap again.

Donna was a lover of nature and animals of all kinds. She loved and respected all God's creatures. She was kind—she would not even kill a bug; but instead catch them and set them free outside. She had a pet rooster as a child and raised peeps to chickens; saved baby birds lives (even teaching them to fly). Squirrels would eat peanuts out of her hand at riverfront (Susquehanna) park. She saved and bottle-fed many a baby kitten; loved dogs (still spoke of her childhood dog Tippy) and had many other pet critters from bunnies to mice to guinea pigs to chameleons to tropical fish—even a

horse and a pony. She at one time took care of about 2 dozen stray cats who lived outside a home she had in the country.

Donna was also very artistic—she loved to create beauty. She once painted a mural of dolphins; crabs and fish on her bathroom walls—both realistic and whimsical. She baked and designed beautiful cakes with special themes for her loved ones (always a special cake for her youngest daughter Dana's birthdays). She loved decorating and painting her home with pastel colors (and copper was a favorite color). She loved things to match. She had themes for each room in her home; her living room was Southwestern; her bedroom was jungle-themed (filled with stuffed lions; tigers; giraffe; etc.) and her bathroom was ocean-themed.

Donna especially loved Christmas; and kept the many decades family tradition alive after her parents passed on. We would all dress up and gather together to visit; exchange gifts; and feast (as we did on Easter and Thanksgiving). Donna would hand-make decorations for the Christmas tree (always a fat real pine) like paper doves; and hand painted and dressed clothespin ballerinas and toy soldiers. She would hang lights inside and out (along with full-size light-up figures on the lawn). She also made a snowman and lady with matching outfits (a cloak for her, a top-hat for him). Donna made many a beautiful and unique Christmas wreath; and even handmade beautiful bows for her loved-ones Christmas gifts.

In her younger years Donna also sewed her own clothes and those of her two oldest daughters—Karen and Patty. She also made Halloween costumes for all three of her girls.

Also in her younger days Donna enjoyed many a family cook-out at her brother Dick and sister-in-law Dot's home; with horseshoes; baseball and croquet on the lawn; swimming in the creek; love and laughter. Many a card

game (500 rummy was a favorite) around a big family table was enjoyed. There were family trips to the Shore; amusement parks and pool park trips and many a homemade dinner (especially Sunday dinners at her Mom and Dad's home with her Aunt Eva; Karen and Patty) and Aunt Hazel and Uncle Don visiting after dinner.

Donna also loved to dance with her friends when her oldest daughters were small. They danced to the records/music of the 50's and 60's (the Bootie Green was a favorite) and then there was the Stroll; the Mashed Potato; and the Twist. She would break into impromptu dance with her kids and her sister-in-law Dot also. Donna also loved dolls and would play paper-dolls and Barbie dolls with her niece Gin (who was just 9 years younger). She made rag dolls; designed/drew and sewed clothes for dolls; and later collected Cabbage Patch and Strawberry Shortcake dolls for her youngest daughter Dana.

Donna was primarily a homemaker; but she was employed by National Central Bank; where she used an adding machine; and did "key-punch" which was a precursor to computer disks.

Donna was a fantastic cook and baker from a long-line of fantastic cooks and bakers—always making a feast for the Christmas Eve party (shrimp and chicken barbecue were favorites). She also made (and sold) handmade candies. Her garlic bread; chicken fingers and homemade chicken pot-pie were legendary. Her potato salad was the best in the universe. Yet one of Donna's favorite things was to "eat out".

Donna also loved to garden (both flowers and vegetables). And gave her tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers to family and neighbors (some she barely knew) because of her giving heart. She had a tender (even child-like) heart; and would often tear-up at a drama or sentimental movie.

Donna made many a delicious meal for her eldest daughter Karen (while Karen helped with housekeeping; decorating her home; and watching HGTV together). Mom and Karen shared many a shopping trip together; and spoke daily by phone or in-person; always with a hug and a kiss and an “I love you.” Donna was such a loving Mother/best friend that she would call multiple times just to make sure Karen was home safe after a visit.

Donna also raised her oldest grandchild; Kelsie. She enjoyed playing video games with her husband Sid; and her grandchildren. In fact; although Donna and Sid maintained separate homes for 29 years; they still visited; shared holidays (good times and bad) dinners and anniversaries. In fact; they celebrated their 46th Wedding Anniversary on June 5th 2022 just weeks before they both passed.

Donna was a beautiful woman both inside and out—with deep set almond-shaped black eyes; high cheekbones with delicate bone-structure; and full expressive lips (not to mention a beautiful smile). As a young woman in the 60's; she loved her mini-skirts. Her daughter Karen would say: “You have the best legs in Harrisburg Mom!”. She was 5' 1” tall in her youth; small but spunky. Donna fought for a good life for herself and her family; only thinking about how she could give them wisdom; guidance; encouragement; concern; forgiveness; financial support and most of all love right up 'til the end of her life here on earth.

Donna brought color and light; beauty joy and love into the lives of all she knew. Life will never be the same without this precious priceless one.

Donna did not always receive the loving and kind words and treatment she so richly deserved in her lifetime; so her daughter Karen would like to dedicate the following poem to her Mama; with the sure and certain knowledge that

much love and honor are now hers in Heaven....

## SPEAK GENTLY

Speak gently; it is better far to rule by love than fear;

Speak gently; let no harsh words mar the good we might do here!

For love whispers low the vows that true love binds; and gently friendships accents flow—affections voice is kind.

Speak gently to the little child! His love be sure to gain. Teach him in accents soft and mild; he may not long remain.

Speak gently to the young, for they will have enough to bear—pass through this life as best they may, 't is full of anxious care!

Speak gently to the aged one; grieve not the careworn heart; the sands of life are nearly run—let each one in peace depart!

Speak gently; kindly to the poor; let no harsh tone be heard; they have enough they must endure without an unkind word!

Speak gently to the erring; know they may have toiled in vain; perchance unkindness made them so; oh win them back again!

Speak gently! He who gave His life to bend man's stubborn will; when elements were in fierce strife said to them: "Peace; be still!"

Speak gently; 't is a little thing dropped in the hearts deep well; the good; the joy that it may bring—eternity shall tell....

Donna was predeceased by her parents Chester Hayes Bruckhart and Myrle Romaine Barr-Bruckhart; and paternal grandparents Burchard Hayes Bruckhart; and Clara E. Kauffman-Bruckhart. She did not have a chance to know her maternal grandparents, Howard Sylvester Barr; and Susan Miller-Barr because Donna's mother Myrle lost her mother Susan (Donna's maternal grandmother) when Myrle was age 10. Donna's brother Kenneth Richard Bruckhart and her beloved sister-in-law Dorothy (Dot) Stewart-Bruckhart and their son (Donna's nephew) Kirk Douglas Bruckhart also predeceased her; as

did her maternal Aunts; Eva May Pauline Barr-Baumgardner-Johnson; and Hazel Barr-Diehl (wife of Donald Diehl). These three sisters (Eva; Myrle and Hazel) and their two husbands (Chester and Don) were like the five musketeers. Another maternal Aunt; LaFaye; and Uncle Howard Sylvester Barr Jr. (husband of Sally) also predeceased her. Her father's brothers were Frank and Charles Bruckhart; her paternal Great-Aunts were Alice Kauffman; and Myrtle Kauffman-Harmes (wife of John); her paternal Great-Uncles were A. Chester Kauffman and Harry Z. Kauffman; cousin Jean Baumgartner-McAfee (wife of Howard McAfee) and various other cousins....Donna was also predeceased by her 1st husband Elmer Mitchell Varner (with whom she had a brief marriage in her youth) and her second husband Sidney Anthony Secrist—who was her husband of 46 years.

She is survived by three daughters; Karen Ann Varner; Patty Lynn Varner; and Dana Marie Secrist; and three grandchildren; Kelsie Nicole Secrist; Darian Michael Lumpkin; and Michael Anthony Lerch. She is also survived by her beloved niece Virginia (Ginny) Bruckhart-Lingle; wife of Larry Lingle; her nephew Michael Bruckhart; husband of Majorie Shanaman-Bruckhart; great nieces Rebecca Lingle-Hoffmaster (wife of James Hoffmaster) and great-niece Michelle Bruckhart and great-nephew Matthew Bruckhart along with their children....

Worthy of mention is Bertie Stewart (always a friend) and Marylou Stewart-Kenna; wife of Steve Kenna (Donna's sister-in-law Dot's sisters). Donna also had a life-long friend of 60 years; whom she spoke with by phone daily. Both were from Shipoke. They shared their memories/history; good times and bad; laughter and love. This dear friend is Nancy Beachler (affectionately known as Nancy B). May God comfort all who loved her....as Donna would say: "...Love you; later...."

God be with you 'til we meet again; with His Spirit uphold you; with His sheep

securely fold you;

God be with you 'til we meet again....”

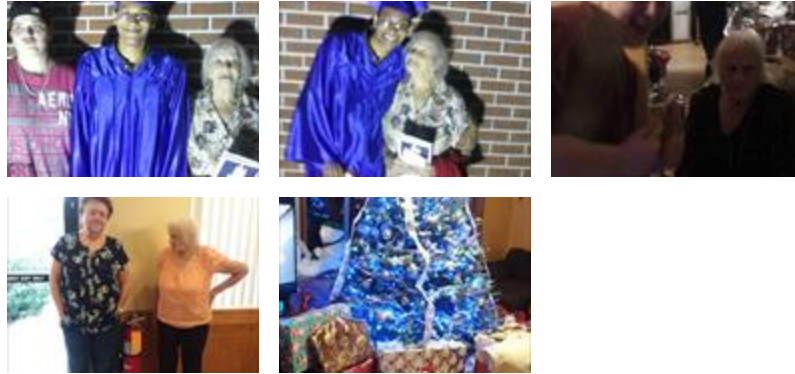
'Til we meet; 'til we meet; 'til we meet at Jesus' feet....

'Til we meet; 'til we meet....God be with you 'til we meet again!!!!

# Tribute Wall

PV

“ 18 files added to the tribute wall



Patty Varner - July 17, 2022 at 08:17 PM

DS

“ Dana Secrist sent a virtual gift in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist



Dana Secrist - July 17, 2022 at 01:14 PM

DS

“ Dana Secrist lit a candle in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist



Dana Secrist - July 17, 2022 at 01:14 PM

DS

“ *Dana Secrist lit a candle in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist*



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**Dana Secrist** - July 17, 2022 at 01:14 PM

DS

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



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**Dana Secrist** - July 16, 2022 at 05:46 PM

DS

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*

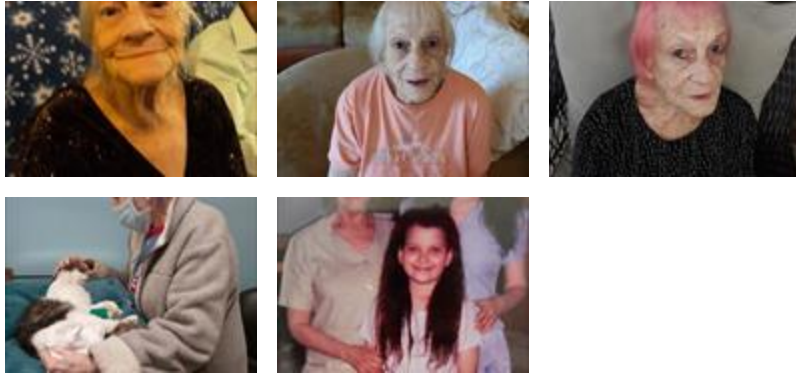


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**Dana Secrist** - July 16, 2022 at 05:42 PM

DS

“ 29 files added to the tribute wall



Dana Secrist - July 16, 2022 at 05:41 PM

DS

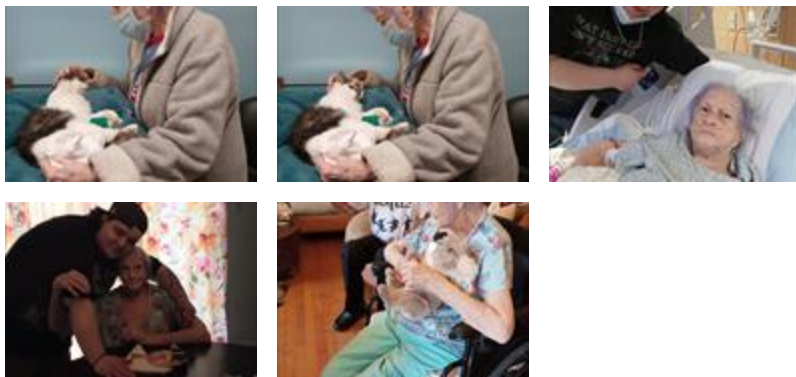
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Dana Secrist - July 16, 2022 at 05:39 PM

DS

“ 52 files added to the tribute wall



Dana Secrist - July 16, 2022 at 05:37 PM

DS

“ 18 files added to the tribute wall



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Dana Secrist - July 16, 2022 at 05:12 PM

DS

“ *My Mama was a beautiful soul. She was kind to animals and always rescued them Whenever she could. As a child I remember her bottle feeding orphaned kittens and hand feeding baby birds. She would always make my dad put spiders outside instead of smashing them. She would cry at TV and movies and she loved loved her kids and grandkids no matter what drama we put her through. She loved to laugh. She had a beautiful smile. I miss her laugh. I miss her. She was always there to pick up the phone. She went all out on Christmas and decorated her whole house and front yard. She hand made ornaments and decorations and threw the BEST CHRISTMAS EVE PARTIES! She hand made my doll clothes and Halloween costumes and even made rag dolls and candy. Even though she didn't go to church every Sunday She ALWAYS LOVED CHRIST. She talked about dressing up and walking with her big brother to church and singing in the choir. She was with my dad for 54 years. She was on his paper route when he was a boy, and his first delivery as a delivery man was to her house. She loved talking to her best friend Nancy Beachler and sitting by the pool as us kids swam all day. I had a wonderful childhood. She was a great cook and made the best Chicken pot pie ever. We will always love and miss her and I'm so glad she was my Mama.*

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**Dana Secrist** - July 16, 2022 at 02:11 PM

DS

“ *Dana Secrist sent a virtual gift in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist*



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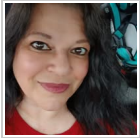
**Dana Secrist** - July 16, 2022 at 01:57 PM



“ Dana Secrist lit a candle in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist

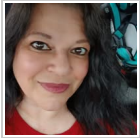


Dana Secrist - July 16, 2022 at 01:56 PM

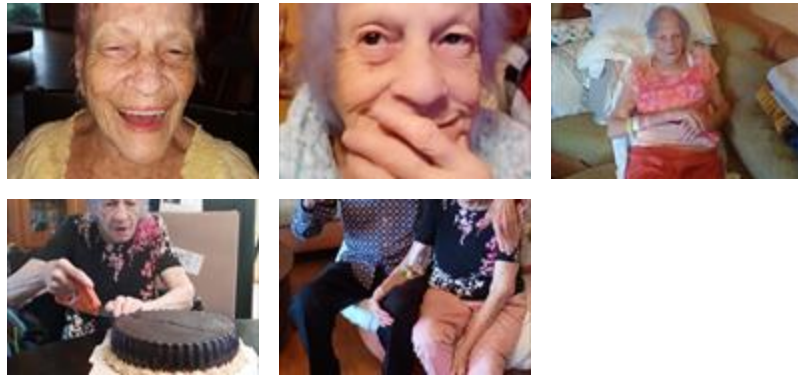


“ 32 files added to the tribute wall

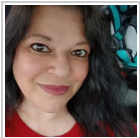
Dana Secrist - July 15, 2022 at 03:41 PM



“ 32 files added to the tribute wall



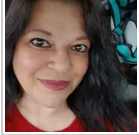
Dana Secrist - July 15, 2022 at 03:40 PM



“ Dana Secrist lit a candle in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist



Dana Secrist - July 15, 2022 at 03:37 PM



“ Dana Secrist sent a virtual gift in memory of Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist



Dana Secrist - July 15, 2022 at 03:37 PM



“ Dear Aunt Donna --- I usually called all of my aunts by their first name and did not use the term "aunt" very often because I considered all of my aunts as sisters including Donna. She was only nine years older than me and we "played" together often. Paper dolls with homemade costumes and animals are the two things I remember most about her. She was very creative and she loved animals. She loved to laugh and have a good time with family and friends. Donna will be greatly missed and we look forward to meeting again in Heaven. Love, Niece Ginnie Bruckhart Lingle

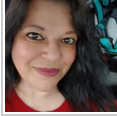
Virginia Lingle - July 15, 2022 at 03:08 PM



“ 44 files added to the album Donna Lorraine (Bruckhart) Varner Secrist



Musselman Funeral Home & Cremation Services Inc. - July 14, 2022 at 08:58 AM



*My mama was a kind and generous soul. She loved her girls and her grandchildren unconditionally, no matter what drama we all had dishes out. She loved animals and would rescue them whenever she could. We all have memories of her saving kittens and bottle feeding them, saving baby bunnies and birds, and making my dad run in to put a spider outside instead of smashing it. She was the type of person who would cry at movies and tv, and even though she didn't go to church every Sunday as she grew older like when she was young, she still LOVES THE LORD. She talked of dressing up and being so proud to walk with her big brother to church so she could sing in the choir. My father even sat behind her there 1 time before they were together as a couple. She loved Christmas and always went out of her way to decorate and have the best Christmas Eve party. She hand sewed a lot of my doll clothes, Halloween costumes and my sister's Easter outfits. She made wreaths and decorations for the Christmas tree, hand sewed curtains, and was all around very crafty. She loved sitting and talking with her Best friend Nancy Beachler, going out to eat with my Dad, But most of all...she loved us. We will all miss her terribly.*

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**Dana Secrist** - July 15, 2022 at 03:52 PM

DS

*I've sent comments twice. I don't think they are showing up*

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**Dana Secrist** - July 17, 2022 at 01:13 PM

MK

“ *I'll always remember Donna's cute laugh and sweet smile. She was quite the cook and quite the animal lover. She endured many heartaches in life but always seemed to make the best of it and move on. She will be missed by many. I'm so very thankful that she came to CHRIST before her final moments and I will see her in Glory one day*  
*Peace to all the family Love Mary Lou*

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**Mary Lou Kenna** - July 14, 2022 at 08:09 AM

MF

“ *0 file added to the tribute wall*

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**MFH** - July 12, 2022 at 04:11 PM