



Elizabeth "Betsy" Pleasants Whitehead

October 25, 1943 - September 24, 2017

Elizabeth "Betsy" Pleasants Whitehead, 73, passed away peacefully on September 24, 2017 at Autumn Hills Special Care Center. She was born October 25, 1943 in Washington, DC, the daughter of Richard R. Pleasants and Helen Ewing Pleasants. For the last 34 years Betsy has made her home in Bloomington, Indiana with her husband Donald R. Whitehead, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Indiana University.

She earned a BA in Education from Boston University, Boston, MA and taught at elementary schools in Jamaica Plains, MA. She worked as Executive Assistant for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee in Boston. Later, she was the Executive Assistant to the Director at the Kennedy Institute for Politics at Harvard University. In Indiana, she found her calling with Area 10 Agency on Aging. Betsy loved playing tennis, both competitively and socially at the IU Tennis Center and Russell Road clay courts. She participated in a local book club and Confucius discussion group. Over the years, she also participated in many Audubon Christmas bird counts. She loved to sing and work in her flower garden.

Betsy was beloved by so many. Her family is particularly grateful to Dayna Thompson (Alzheimer Resource Services, IU Health) for her gentle guidance, to the extraordinary nursing staff at Autumn Hills who helped Betsy live her final days joyously (so many angels there), to Premier Hospice nurses, Susan and Megan for their tender care, and to her roommate at Autumn Hills, Lois. Most of all, Betsy's family is grateful for the amazing circle of friends who

stayed connected and engaged with Betsy until her death. There was never a moment that Betsy did not recognize and delight in their loving presence.

Betsy's family includes her husband Donald Whitehead, stepchildren Pamela Whitehead (Paul Almond) of Sacramento, CA and Peter Whitehead (June) of Woodstock, GA, and grandchildren Jaclyn Whitehead Kroll (Brendan Kroll) and Colin Whitehead. She is survived by her siblings, Belinda P. Smith of Manchester, MA, Richard E. Pleasants of Concord, MA and Cornelia Pleasants of Norridgewock, ME.

The Whitehead family has established a special fund in honor of Betsy and Don Whitehead at the Sycamore Land Trust. The Sycamore Land Trust has long been close to their hearts. The family plans to name a bench or trail at one of Don and Betsy's favorite wildlife preserves, where they spent so many pleasant hours together.

To make donations to the Sycamore Land Trust, log onto their website at: <https://sycamorelandtrust.org/donate>. Select the "Donation Reason" button and select "In Honor of" and put in "Betsy Whitehead". For "Address of Honoree", please fill in the following information: Pam Whitehead 1111 Arroyo Grande Drive Sacramento, CA 95864

A Celebration of Life is planned for October 29th at Oliver Winery's Original Tasting Room from 3-5:30 PM. Remembrance Sharing Time will take place at 3:30 followed by a reception at 4 PM. Friends are welcome to join us in celebrating Betsy's wonderful spirit.

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory 4155 South Old State Road 37 is handling the arrangements and online condolences, photos, and memories may be shared with family and friends at www.allencares.com.

Tribute Wall

SH

“ *I know this is much after the fact, but she was a lovely person. I was an Americorps volunteer at Area 10 in Bloomington. She was a warm person to all. Condolences to her family.*

shannon - October 27, 2025 at 12:22 AM

NP

“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Nina Pleasants - November 06, 2017 at 08:29 AM

JH

Betsy was more than a delight to be with. Such a bright and serious thinker I knew her at school and then more and better when she worked with Jonathan at the JFK institute. And what a smile!

jaqueth hutchinson - June 11, 2020 at 09:35 AM

SJ

“ *Beautiful Betsy -- our Concord Academy May Day Queen -- beautiful in spirit, in generosity and in kindness to everyone. So lovely and unassuming, so gentle and yet -- a ferocious competitor on the sports field. Everyone wanted Betsy on their team at all times, in every situation. Love and prayers and blessings, Sandra*

Sandra Willett Jackson - October 09, 2017 at 06:25 PM

JH

*Betsy is in my memory book in such a number of pages Her humor
And her spirit -so strong
I knew her in high school and then when she worked with Jonathan
Moore at the jfk institute She was such an ALIVE soul. So glad our
paths crossed in two such different ways*

jaqueth hutchinson - June 11, 2020 at 09:48 AM

TE

“*My Dear Cousin Betsy: Who seemed to cruise through time with a
smile on her face, with a joyful countenance and a spirit that openly
invited people into her gracious world. I only wish I had known her
better, even though the special moments we shared will stay
forever. Thank you dear Betsy for making life more beautiful for all
those who knew you.*

*Ted Ewing
Rosarito, MX*

Ted Ewing - October 07, 2017 at 05:08 PM

NI

“ *My Big Sister Betsy:
Taught me how to twist to Fats Domino.
To sing “He’s So Fine” with the Chiffons.
To passionately love Ray Charles.*

She cut my hair. (badly)

She taught me how to smoke, eat avocados with vinaigrette, make hollandaise sauce to eat with artichokes and how to wear beads and scarfs with a flair.

She would let me stay up late while she studied in high school if I tickled her back for hours! (Mom & Dad never knew).

She held my head over the toilet the first time I got drunk. (they didn’t know that either)

She always smelled good – Chanel #5, Shalimar

She introduced me to Marimeko and taught me to love purple, and lilac and pink.

She dared to go to NYC, to live on the beach in Malibu in “69, to turn down dates with Dustin Hoffman and Tony Conigliaro. And drink espresso.

She always told Mom everything. Really everything!! We begged her not to.

She taught me how to cook, how to drive a stick shift, and took me to an EST meeting.

And always had good advice about Men.

Being with my sister was like being with a celebrity, people were drawn to her, and I was proud to be seen with her.

Nina Pleasants

Nina - October 05, 2017 at 03:52 PM

JH

Lovely reminiscence Nina

jaqueth hutchinson - June 11, 2020 at 04:27 PM

MA

thank you Nina.

I lived with Betsy for a very short time in Jamaica Plains Mass. until the very house was sold. I was in awe of Betsy and her BEAUTIFUL PRESENCE.

With the greatest regret life events propelled me forward non-stop until now August 2021 when I have the honor of reconnecting with Friends living in the house with Betsy. A great regret because our paths unwittingly intersected criss-crossed the country in the following forty years. How I regret not reaching out especially when Betsy was in Bloomington where My roots go deep almost 100 years. And also NYC, Malibu and EST.

I was in awe of vivacious Betsy whom I wished I could have had as a real sister.

Maril

Maril - August 27, 2021 at 05:41 PM

NI

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Nina - October 05, 2017 at 01:49 PM