



## Melva Ann West Benham

January 22, 1941 - March 5, 2024

Melva Ann West Benham 83, of Clearwater, Florida, died Tuesday March 5, 2024, at Jill's House memory care in Bloomington, Indiana, with her family by her side.

She was born at home on January 22, 1941, in Marble, North Carolina, the second of five children of Venson Frank and Evelyn Lenore (Ford) West. Growing up, she listened to Italian opera on the record player, tended 1,500 chickens and tried her best to ride the family plow horse, who was always too tired.

In 1959, she graduated from Andrews High School, where she was co-captain of the basketball team and voted Best Personality. After she graduated from Mars Hill College, her father gave her a red 1964 Ford Falcon and the payment book. She drove Jezebel for 30 years.

She became a medical technologist in 1964 and traveled to New York to learn to use the latest equipment. She wanted a family, and when she married George David Benham in 1973, she got one instantly, becoming a mother to Terry, 12, Sherry, 10, and Joe, 8. Kelley was born in 1974. The family moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and then to Clearwater, Florida, where Melva worked at Morton Plant Hospital. In the lab, she was a mentor to the other techs with her old school knowledge of chemistry and her contempt for standard deviations. If a lab result was not on the mean, she did it over. She could be found in her white lab coat and duty shoes nurturing finicky machines into proper performance, particularly the one called Osmo, which everyone

considered her instrument. She retired in 2011 after 47 years and regretted it the rest of her life.

She devoured used mystery and romance novels, ferried Kelley to horse shows and cheered for all North Carolina collegiate basketball teams. She and George divorced but remained regulars at Crest Lake Dog Park with Finn, who lived with him but belonged to her. She traveled for 35 years with the Girls' Night Out bowling team and visited England with her sisters twice. She generously supported the ambitions of her children, grandchildren and charities, but rarely indulged in anything for herself. She rinsed and reused aluminum foil and hung paper towels to dry.

In 2021, she moved to Bloomington, Indiana, to be closer to Kelley. She clapped at her granddaughter's plays, screamed at the refs during IU women's basketball games and strolled around with her dog, Bernadette, in matching Christmas pajamas. Her granddaughters, Juniper, Brooke and Greysi, kept her supplied with butter pecan ice cream, which she always shared.

In her last year, after a lifetime of never asking for anything, Melva became determined to ride a horse. And against all probability, she did.

Melva is survived by her daughter Kelley (Thomas) Benham French of Bloomington, Indiana; by Terry (Carlyn) Benham of Camarillo, California, Sherry Benham Wagner of Seminole, Florida, and Joe Benham of Andrews, North Carolina; by fourteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren; by her siblings Rick (Jan) West of Heavener, Oklahoma; Carolyn (John) White of Huntsville, Alabama, and Clarice West of Southern Pines, North Carolina; and by George David Benham of Clearwater, Florida.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Venson and Evelyn West; and by her brother Ford (Cathy) West.

Memorial contributions may be made to People and Animal Learning Services of Bloomington, Indiana, or Suncoast Animal League of Palm Harbor, Florida. Allen Funeral Home and Crematory have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and

friends at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com)

# Tribute Wall



“ I work with Melva at Morton plant hospital. Though we were on separate shifts, we interacted and I always liked and respected her. I ran into her at the airport one morning and immediately got a big hug. She could be tough but she was also very kind. She will be missed. Jo Hubbard

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**Nyla Jo Jones Hubbard** - March 24, 2024 at 07:34 AM