

Duanne Bondurant Puckett

April 3, 1950 - February 21, 2021

Interred: Section Chapel, Lot/Row 1A, Space 1



Puckett family photo. Parents, Jesse, Ella, back row. Front row, Marsha, Duanne and Terry.

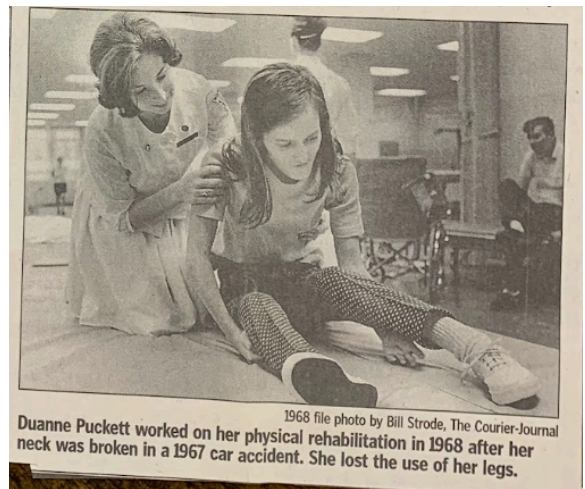
Duanne Bondurant Puckett, a native of Shelbyville Kentucky, was born to Jesse, former Mayor of Shelbyville, and Ella Puckett on April 3rd, 1950. She was the third of three daughters, her sisters being Terry Long and Marsha James. She was nicknamed “Bug” as a child, by her aunt, a name stuck with her throughout the rest of her life.

On February 25th, 1967, when Duanne was 16 years old, the car she was a passenger in was rear-ended by a drunk driver. The car filled with four passengers was legally stopped at a traffic light on the corner of 7th and Washington streets in Shelbyville, Kentucky. The accident severed her spinal cord. Puckett told anyone who asked, that was the date she was married to a wheelchair.

Doctors were doubtful Duanne would live past the age of thirty. She was just short of her 72nd birthday when she passed, in February. Following the accident, she was in the hospital and rehab for about nine months. Diagnosed a quadriplegic, Duanne miraculously had some usage of her hands and arms. Later the surgical transplant of a tendon in her arm gave her more flexibility allowing her to type like a whiz.

Duanne never let the accident stop her. Before the accident, she was a cheerleader, a straight “A” student, a member of the golf team, and the Kentucky Youth Assembly’s speaker of the house. After the accident she still went and cheered on the sidelines, still got up bright and early for school, and never saw her disability as a disability.

Duanne partly credits this to a seven-year-old boy. On her first night in rehab, Duanne saw Freddie, a boy with severe rheumatoid arthritis who had little hope to ever walk. Duanne stated, “He’s one of the reasons I accepted this. I can just remember my dad and I thinking, ‘Look what all I had done in 16 years of my life that that child was never going to do.’ And my dad said, ‘We’ll deal



Duanne in physical rehabilitation.

with this, whatever we need to do. You're not going to give up, and we're not going to give up' And we just plowed ahead." Duanne went on to graduate from high school in 1968.

It was Duanne's dream to be a special ed teacher. However, options to attend college were unavailable to her. The American Disability Act, which gave so many a pathway to college, was 22 years away.

As 1969 was closing, the publisher of The Shelby News, Robert A. Fay, asked Duanne if she'd like to be the paper's receptionist and "rolling reporter" starting January 4, 1970. Her acceptance of his invitation, combined with her strong work ethic, devotion to her community, and journalistic integrity, changed the course of her life. Before the end of January 1970 she was selling classified ads.

By the time the competing papers, The Shelby News and The Shelby Sentinel merged in 1972, Duanne had already moved from classified advertising manager, to be a reporter for The Sentinel-News. She served as Family Living editor before being named news editor in 1982. By 1989, Puckett was an editor responsible for a twice weekly newspaper, a weekly regional shopper and 12 special sections a year.

In 1998, the Shelby County Public Schools District hired Duanne as its community relations coordinator. She saw the new role as an opportunity to fulfill her dream of teaching and helping kids. She retired from her second busy career in 2013 to become senior writer for the local magazine, Shelby County Life.

Duanne earned numerous awards as she made a difference in her community. She received awards from the local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Landmark Community Newspapers, Inc., including the coveted community service award, the Shelbyville Business Professional Women's Achievement Award, the Kentucky Farm Bureau Communications Award, Shelby County Chamber of Commerce Small Business Advocate of the Year Award. She was inducted into the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

Duanne loved being the children's moment storyteller in her home church of Centenary United Methodist. She co-founded the Shelby County Literacy Council and served as a volunteer writing coach and Sunday School Teacher.



Duanne coming home from hospital.



Bug's Books logo.



As co-founder of Friends of Grove Hill Cemetery, she regularly cleaned monuments, helped organize fundraising events, and wrote scripts for storytellers, including herself in the annual Stories Behind the Stones events. The cemetery's Chapel Promenade was dedicated to Duanne and her mentor Betty Buntain Matthews in October 2021.

She had a tremendous impact on her community and the lives of those within it. To honor her life and contributions, the organizers of Reading Reindeer, which Duanne was a co-founder of, decided to honor her by renaming it Bug's Books. The community service project gives books to

children who do not have ready access to a book of their own. The City of Shelbyville renamed the Shelbyville Heritage and History Center the Duanne B. Puckett Building.

Duanne was known for a lot of things, she was said to be “a very organized person, a take-charge person, and I-can-do-it person.” She also planned her funeral. Here are a few things she wanted to be said about her:

“Hobbies, interests. Reading. Writing. Sitting in the sun. Hanging out at the cemetery. Taking day trips. Friends.”

“Music. Bob Dylan, John Prine, Nanci Griffith, soul. Dad said Dylan sounded like a cat getting killed. ‘Forever Young’ by Dylan because he blesses the listener while he reminds us to be grateful for our past.”

“Unforgettable advice. If you are on time, you’re late. Always wear lipstick, inside and outside of the house.”

“Special talents: Writer, can put words together to provide information or to entertain. Public Speaking, can address a small group or large crowd without a sweat.”

“Regrets: Should have had more courage and attended college.”

“Most proud: Awards that I have received humble me, yet confirm that I have worked hard to make a difference in my community... my hometown.”

“Commemorate my life. ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ Look out for the underdog and the less fortunate.”

“Hope to be remembered. Faithful to family, friends, and church. Honest. Fun. Trustworthy. Dedicated to whatever mission I encountered.”

Written by: Hannah Considine, Katelynn Kendall, and Karsen Fannin

Final editing and formatting by Friends of Grove Hill

References: Jack Brammer’s tribute; Marsha James Puckett’s memories; Duanne Puckett’s obituary written by same; The NEW Shelby County Ky Area News by Cynthia L McIntosh

Final editing and formatting by Friends of Grove Hill

Stories Behind the Stones – A Project Based Learning Partnership of Shelby County High School Junior History Class 2024, Friends of Grove Hill Cemetery, Calvary Cemetery Friends, and Shelby County Historical Society.

Thanks to all the students and educators from SCHS who worked with us to provide this historical record for our community.



© Grove Hill Cemetery 2024