



Virginia Edythe Higgins

October 5, 1948 - March 16, 2020

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Virginia Edythe Higgins was born on October 5, 1948 in Alexandria, Virginia, the middle child of Cecelia Keyworth Irvine and George Joseph Irvine. Friends and family from her younger years know her affectionately as Ginny and for the last forty years she went by Virginia.

Virginia married Michael James Higgins, the older brother of her dear friend Pat Forbes, in November 1967 at the tender age of 19 and gave birth to their daughter Heather Michele Higgins in 1970. While the young couple lived in married student housing at the University of Virginia for the 1969-70 school year, and Virginia worked at the University, she was nevertheless banned from all but night classes due to the University's gender discrimination. Virginia was a stunning beauty and must have been a particularly striking sight around the all-male Grounds, pregnant and sporting short dresses of the day. It brought Virginia great satisfaction that the University began opening admissions to women with the next school year. Undaunted in the face of adversity from a young age and armed with a great intellect and wicked sense of humor, Virginia helped to change the world by being herself loud and proud and fighting injustices everywhere she found them. Thankfully, she was not alone, although she was no less remarkable for being one of many advocating for women's rights as a fundamental step towards human rights in the second half of the 20th century.

Despite the daily pressures of working to support her husband while he pursued his degree, raising a child, and eventually also pursuing her own degree, Virginia took Heather to iconic pro-choice rallies, peace marches, and cultural events in Richmond, VA and Washington DC. Summer camp at the Smithsonian Institute and ballet performances at the Kennedy Center are just some of the ways she sought to inspire Heather's curiosity, confidence, and appreciation of the arts and humanities. What amazing gifts! Virginia lived her values of unfaltering advocacy and support of educational and professional

opportunities for women and their fundamental reproductive rights, by donating, marching, and speaking truth to power at every turn.

Virginia's father was a filmmaker and technical advisor for the Navy and OSS Field Photo during WWII, making it no surprise that Virginia was drawn to cameras and filmmaking. Breaking into filmmaking was exceptionally difficult for women and she knew she needed a career that would support her and her daughter, so she pivoted her interest into television. In addition to UVA, Virginia also studied at the University of South Carolina - Columbia and ultimately earned her Bachelors in Broadcast Media from American University in about 1980.

While completing her degree and co-parenting her daughter, she began a trailblazing, successful career in television, initially at WETA 26 in Arlington, Virginia, working on esteemed programs such as MacNeil/Lehrer Report and In Performance at The White House, and ultimately earning three Emmy Awards for her best-in-class work as a Senior Video Operator for her work on All My Children for ABC Television in New York City. Ronne, Virginia's younger brother by 9 years, cherishes his memories of visiting his big sister at the WETA studio and when she was working camera on live remote events such as A Capitol Fourth in Washington, D.C. He was so impressed, fascinated, and proud of what Ginny was doing. Virginia brought school age Heather to the station at times and let her go adventuring throughout the studios and control rooms, even letting her work the phones for a pledge drive when she was maybe, perhaps but probably not, old enough.

Virginia's personal and professional integrity drove her to stay ahead of the technology curve and out of the fray of network politics. She earned the respect and admiration of her peers and other industry leaders and was highly sought after for the caliber and creativity of her work, first as a camera operator and then as a senior video operator. Virginia used her influence to help other young women break in and be taken seriously, as others had helped her.

After her first marriage, which brought the young family briefly to San Francisco in the early 1970s and then back to Northern Virginia, Virginia's life began anew when she met her life partner and true love, Jeffrey Philipson, and joined him and his teenage sons Glenn and Adam in Brooklyn Heights, New York in 1983, followed by Heather a year later. Glenn and Adam had moved out of the house by then to attend college and follow their passions for acting. Even when living in California, they stayed connected to the family. Regardless of some challenges at different points, Virginia and Jeffrey were always incredibly proud of all three kids. While Virginia transitioned her career to the NYC metro area by initially commuting to New Jersey to work for WWOR-TV 9, Jeffrey proudly ran the

third-generation family printing business, Philipson Press, Inc. in Tribeca, the financial district, and Bedford-Stuyvesant, befriending and beloved by the artist community, neighbors, and small business owners until he sold the business and retired in 1997.

Virginia and Jeffrey were consummate hosts and often gathered fascinating and diverse groups of family and friends for dinner parties in their apartment or up on the roof of their building amidst the panoramic view of the New York skyline. Virginia's mother raised her to set an impeccable table with fine linens, silver, china, and an endless array of delicacies. You simply could not leave their home hungry, thirsty, or bored. You might leave with a belly ache from laughing so hard.

Virginia and Jeffrey moved to the Riverdale neighborhood of the Bronx in 1999. They were lucky to have the remarkable Robin Weinstein and Paul Alpert as their nextdoor neighbors and became fast friends and extended family members of the growing family. Some of Virginia's fondest memories of those years are of Jeffrey and young Brandon, completely attuned to each other while creating salads and art projects and of rocking and reading Brandon to sleep when she would get home from work.

Virginia retired in the mid-2000s, which freed her up for, you guessed it, more entertaining at their apartment in The River House of Riverdale. They hosted large family brunches, holiday dinners, and their annual Easter egg hunt with Robin and Paul's kids. In 2012, Jeffrey moved into the Hebrew Home of Riverdale. It was a difficult adjustment for the couple and the family as a whole, but they found a rhythm, visiting with each other often and speaking on the phone daily. Family gatherings were sometimes at the apartment and sometimes at the Hebrew Home, surrounded by the breathtaking sculpture garden and panoramic view of the Hudson River.

Jeffrey has been sculpting his whole adult life; Virginia and Jeffrey's homes and the homes of their children have always been filled with his artwork and the paintings of his beloved aunt, the renowned painter Sara Pildes.

Other beloved family and dear friends of Virginia's and Jeffrey's include Sara's sister, the larger-than-life Doris Philipson Press, Jeffrey's brothers and sisters-in-law, Ira and Rebecca Philipson and Steve and Barbara Philipson, Jeffrey's many cousins nieces, nephews, and their children, and many dear friends including Steven and Louise Bergerson and their extended family especially Steven's mother Jeanette Bergerson, Kathie Falgitano, Francesca and Jamie Yates, Eddie Kritzler, Helen Kritzler, David Appleton, George and Lydia Montanez, Danny Pildes, Barrin Bonet, Elisa Eisenman and Robert Cohen, Brian Sirota, and Marty Hurley. Virginia and Jeffrey cherished their many

cats over the years, Spunky, Toughy, Missy, and Sheba, and dote on their granddogs Miss Lottie, Miss Izzy, and Winslow.

In addition to Virginia's parents and siblings, some of the earliest and most beloved people in her early life were close family friends of her parents, Drs. Muriel & Irving Gardner (North Bethesda, Maryland) and Dick & Billy Walker (Fairfield, Virginia) and their kids, whose memories she cherished until her death.

Virginia left this life the way she lived it, with courage, determination, on her own terms, and supported in love. She died peacefully on March 16, 2020 at Allen Hospital in Manhattan, being held by her daughter and showered with messages of love and wishes for peace. The room was kept joyful with comforting music. Virginia's family is forever indebted to the medical professionals who tended to her throughout her life and especially at the end, including the doctors, nurses, and aides of the NewYork-Presbyterian hospital system and in particular at the Allen Hospital. In addition, the family deeply appreciates the team at the Methodist Home for Nursing and Rehabilitation where she received excellent physical therapy on numerous occasions.

Virginia was preceded in death by her parents Cecelia Keyworth Irvine and George Joseph Irvine and her sister Patricia Cecelia Irvine. She is survived by Jeffrey Philipson (Bronx, New York), Heather Higgins (Charlottesville, Virginia), Jeffrey's sons Glenn Lawson (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) and Adam Scott Philipson (Little Silver, New Jersey), Adam's wife Alma Delia Philipson (Little Silver, New Jersey), and Virginia's brother Ronne Irvine (Reston, Virginia). She adored being Grandma to Adam and Alma Philipson's children Amanda and Aldan (Little Silver, New Jersey) and Robin Weinstein and Paul Alpert's children Brandon, Zoe, and Ryan (Bronx, New York), all of whom brought her so much joy and happiness in the past years when her health was a challenge. Virginia also loved and was beloved almost as an Abuela by the many nieces and nephews of Alma and Adam in Puebla, Mexico.

Please do not send flowers. Instead, Virginia asks that you vote in every election. She would be honored if you also choose to celebrate her life with a donation to Planned Parenthood (<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/get-involved/other-ways-give>), Emily's List (<https://secure.emilyslist.org/page/contribute/in-memoriam>), ASPCA (<https://secure.asPCA.org/donate/memorial>) or Compassion & Choices (<https://compassionandchoices.org/contribution/give-a-gift-in-honor-of-a-friend-or-loved-one/>).

In keeping with her wishes, there will be no public memorial service. It's no surprise that Virginia chose as her last act of charity to donate her body to science. A private family event will be arranged for a later date. Cards of condolence can be sent to 821 Altavista Ave, Charlottesville, VA 22902 and will be shared with the family. You are welcome to leave a funny story or cherished memory on the Tribute Wall.

Comments



“ 36 files added to the album Virginia Higgins



Heather Higgins - March 23 at 12:30 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Virginia Higgins



Eric Bergerson - March 23 at 11:16 AM



“ So many memories, of which introducing Jeffrey and Virginia to our daughter was just one. Another memory - Baked Garlic!

Eric Bergerson - March 23 at 11:13 AM



“ 2 files added to the album Virginia Higgins



Heather Higgins - March 23 at 09:55 AM



“ As I mentioned in an earlier comment, there's an inadvertent omission from the obituary. I forgot to mention the amazing team at Atria Senior Living where she lived since July 2019. I shouldn't be surprised that during Mom's short time living at Atria, during which she was under a great deal of physical strain, she made so many heartfelt friendships. Mom was a fantastic and empathetic listener and always ready to brighten the mood with her sharp humor. What is very touching is that she was apparently besties with loads of folks, more than I realized. I'm so grateful that while

I've been here packing up her apartment, they've been pulling me aside to let me know that "she's my girl."

Heather Higgins - March 19 at 12:57 PM



“ Absolutely lovely woman. Adored her. And she was a great reader and lover of books.
Casey Childs

casey Childs - March 19 at 04:58 PM



“ Heather, I worked with your mom at channel 9 for many years. She was a wonderful, sweet woman. My condolences.

Matthew Schwartz - March 19 at 07:26 PM



“ I met Virginia later in Heather's adult years in Charlottesville. She was a woman of strength and resilience. Her stories of work are memorable and should be captured. Her daughter is like her in those ways, and she would be proud. Heather, you were amazing for your mother in these later years, and I know she is extremely grateful for your love and kindness and all the people you shared that with around her. My hearts goes out to Jeffrey too for his loss. She made a mark on the lives she touched, and continues to. . .

Kathleen Shannon - March 19 at 09:32 AM



“ Virginia was an incredible person. As a college student and young feminist, I remember being so impressed by her trailblazing job as a camerawoman. I visited her and Jeffrey at their apartment in Brooklyn the year after Heather and I graduated from college, and they were incredibly gracious hosts, treating me to my first New York bagel with whitefish salad. I thought it was the best thing I'd ever eaten and easily ate three. She had great taste and was effortlessly chic. Heather inherited her passion for social justice and her beautiful skin. Love to all of you who loved her

Kristina de los Santos - March 18 at 10:11 PM



“ Virginia was full of life and a true gift in this world. Her calm and focused benevolent energy will continue to be a guiding light in my life. I think that I will choose to picture her driving down the Pacific Coast highway in her favorite “manual” car as one of the dynamic images that I choose to remember her by.
May Virginia Rest In Peace and may her family and friends be comforted among the mourners. I already miss you deeply, Virginia.
Julie

Julie Sherry - March 18 at 09:07 PM



“ 16 files added to the album Virginia Higgins



Heather Higgins - March 18 at 06:45 PM



“ So very sorry to hear she is gone! I saw her in the hospital just 3 months ago! She was always sweetheart! Will miss our chats!

Laura Neumann - March 18 at 05:02 PM



“ Virginia was first class and a dream to work with. Great lighting doesn't exist without a great video engineer and Virginia had the eye and the technical expertise to match. My sincere condolences to Jeffrey, Heather, Glenn, Adam and her extended family.

Love, light and peace.

Candice Dunn

candice - March 18 at 04:35 PM



“ 8 files added to the album Virginia Higgins



Heather Higgins - March 18 at 03:49 PM



“ I met Virginia during my years as a staff Lighting Director at All My Children where we made pretty pictures together. She was one of the best video operators in the company. We became good working buddies and kept each other up to date with the current talk at the water fountain. Later we shared some dinners together in Bronxville and I think in the city as well as at our house in Cornwall, NY We always

laughed a lot. We enjoyed meeting Jeffrey and our conversations with them both. Our condolences go out to Jeffery and Heather and their extended family.. I am so sorry to hear of Virginia's passing. She was a good friend at the studio and for some time after her retirement . We miss her very much.

Alan Blacher
Peter Clem

Alan - March 18 at 03:27 PM



“ Alan, it's so, so wonderful to see your note. I know Mom and Jeffrey really cherished your & Peter's friendship and all of the lovely, entertaining evenings in your homes. I joined them at a few Cornwall evenings and will always treasure the memories. As Mom's health became more challenging, it was harder and harder for her to keep up with friends. Much love to you both!

Heather - March 18 at 03:50 PM



“ Thank you Heather. It is really a rough road when you lose a parent. I found it very hard to cope with the loss of my parents. I miss them still. May you find peace in your mothers passing. As you said she is pain free now and that is a blessing.

Alan

Alan - March 18 at 04:14 PM



“ I also want to thank the truly fabulous people at American Outcomes Management, particularly Ina, Ben, and Larry, for their years of kind assistance to my Mom. They made a meaningful positive difference in her life and I will be forever grateful.

Heather Higgins - March 18 at 02:00 PM



“ There's an inadvertent omission from the obituary. I'd like to also recognize and appreciate the caring team at Atria Senior Living for welcoming my Mom to the community last Summer and providing tremendous care and assistance. So many folks from throughout the organization have reached out already to tell me how much they will miss her. That means a lot.

Heather Higgins - March 18 at 01:13 PM



“ 18 files added to the album Virginia Higgins



Heather Higgins - March 18 at 08:48 AM