



## Sharon Yvonne Kennedy Lawrence

January 25, 1956 - December 27, 2019

Sharon Yvonne Kennedy Lawrence, passed away just shy of her 64th birthday this last Friday, December 27, 2019. She was born 63 years ago at Orlando Health back when it was Orlando Regional, to Marylou Mouery and Richard Edward Kennedy, whom everyone in Orlando knew as Bill. Sheree, as she liked to be called, was the descendant of a long history of interesting Southerners; including presidents, artists, and those of notorious backgrounds. She loved art, especially film, theater, and literature. She was a proud Florida State University Seminole, majoring in education, going on to teach children in the head-start programs. Breaking canon, Sheree was one of the first to campaign for teaching children their individualized needs and interests; not standardization. Her strong beliefs about social welfare and children's education led her into politics early. She worked for the Democratic Convention and she ran for Orange County School Board in 1978. During Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s, she worked for the Army Reserve Family Support program, helping soldiers and families of soldiers in legal and financial binds. It wasn't unusual for her to grab a bag and fly across the country on short notice because a mother in New Jersey couldn't pay her rent while her husband was in Saudi Arabia. As strong as she was, she was extremely private with her own art. She had taken piano and dance as a child. She loved photography and painting with watercolors. But most of all, she loved to write. Unbeknownst to almost everyone, she was actively working as an editor for an online publication at the time of her passing.

Sheree had two daughters, Kathryn Melissa Kennedy Lawrence whom she called Katie, and myself, Victoria Abigail Kennedy Lawrence whom you all might know as Abby. Sheree was a different type of mother than any I knew. She was extremely strict with respecting the rules and customs of our elders, whoever they are. She taught us to say "yes sir" and "no ma'am" while most children couldn't say "mama". We knew how to dress for any situation. We were expected to greet politicians and generals with proper decorum, and we did. We were also expected to politely make intelligent inquiries and to work hard when asked to. Because of this, unlike most children, we were allowed to go into places with my father and mother that many adults haven't been, including rocket laboratories and

Pentagon meeting rooms. We went into horse stalls and jazz clubs. We were expected to be a part of the scene in art studios or on a shrimp boat. We were the only girls that knew why you didn't shake the hand of an ambassador from Egypt with your left hand and how to scale a fish in your driveway or how to shuck peas on your porch.

At the same time that she was strict, she was very liberal. She expected us, girls, to get an education, but not wield it over others. We were expected to know the difference between "tea" and "high tea" and also know how to relax on the back porch of a one-room-cabin on a mountainside. She taught us, girls, how to watch for 'rattlers and chiggers in the fields, how to jaywalk in New York City, and how to always stick to the right side of the escalators in Washington D.C. It wasn't unusual for her to drop everything and take us girls to go eat lunch at Lee's Lakeside at Lake Eola, on her favorite beach of New Smyrna, or in a flowered field in the Appalachian Mountains, showing us how to not anger mother bears.

There are so many memories that I have with her that are too amazing to not share. Her introducing me to the actors who played the munchkins in the Wizard of Oz. Her holding me all night like a teddy bear because she randomly picked a place in Connecticut to go camping in that dropped down to freezing during the night. Her taking us to a concert to meet Isley Brothers. Her taking us to New York City in a camper and forgetting the propane tank was attached and how she sweetly talked to the police officers who stopped all traffic in the Lincoln Tunnel on a weekday morning so we could be escorted the wrong way out. I remember her taking me to political rallies, where I'm dressed in shiny black mary janes and frilly dresses. I remember her taking us to meet a famous artist with one eye that made glass sculptures as big as houses. Then the next day we were sitting with some random older folks and them all teaching me how to graft a citrus tree and remove a black racer without hurting it. It was because of her that I learned French and to curtsy. I was expected to memorize the Bible, the Constitution, my Miranda rights, and Jane Eyre. I knew how to do stitches on myself, give myself a french manicure, and how to write an angry editorial to my newspaper.

She was the most headstrong person I will ever know. And when she said something, she stood by it. She died unexpectedly but exactly where she wanted to. She stated that she would never move out of her home and she didn't. Her heart stopped right where she said it would. And she left this world in the same hospital she was born in. She traveled the world but she never really left Orlando, and that's exactly how she wanted it.

She hated being away from the Earth, so we're returning her as quick as we can in a private burial. We will, however, be holding a memorial service on her upcoming birthday, January 25th, 2020. We will bring some of her favorite food and her favorite music. Please

inquire about us as to the time and location.

Sheree is survived by her mother, Marylou Mouery Sightler, her stepfather, James Edward Sightler, and her husband, John Jerome Lawrence, married for 41 years. She is also survived by her daughters. Kathryn Melissa Kennedy Lawrence, Katie's fiancée Robert Jacint Ortiz, and her youngest daughter, myself, Victoria Abigail Kennedy Lawrence, and my husband, Jakan David Pierce. Additionally, she is survived by her grandchildren, her granddaughter-to-be Liliana Gwenevere Ortiz, and my son, her grandson, Atticus Jackson Pierce; both of whom centered her universe.

Flowers are not necessary but not unwelcome. Any charitable donations can be made to One Heart for Women and Children. Thank you all for sharing and helping us during this unexpected anguish.

<https://www.oneheartforwomenandchildren.org/donate/>

# Cemetery

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## **Greenwood Cemetery**

1603 Greenwood St.

Orlando, FL, 32801

# Comments

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“ I have fond memories of working with Sheree in Family Support during Desert Storm. Her husband, Bill, was a good friend and former Army buddy who I served with at the 143d Transport Command. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Lawrence family.  
Tom & Kathy Rusk  
West Union, SC

**Tom Rusk** - January 02 at 05:04 PM

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“ Sincere condolences to Sheree's family. My family, The Whaling's, and Sheree's family were friends and neighbors growing up in College Park. Sheree and I went from elementary through high school together. My sister, brothers and me have fond memories of hanging out with Sheree and her brothers; running back and forth between each other's houses. I vividly remember Sheree's fondness for Doris Day and the beach. In high school we made a few trips to New Smyrna Beach, visiting her favorite elementary school teacher, Mrs. Schaidt. Again, condolences from our family to yours, and may your fond memories sustain you during this time.  
Brenda (Whaling) Jones, Orlando. FL.

**Brenda Gail Jones (Whaling)** - January 02 at 01:49 PM