



Sharon Elizabeth Walsh

November 2, 1932 - October 25, 2020

Sharon Elizabeth (Gallagher), beloved mother and grandmother, died on October 25 at the age of 87 after a life in which she demonstrated what it is to love over and over again. She leaves five children, seven grandchildren, a dear brother and many nieces, nephews, in-laws and friends. Sharon left us after a struggle with memory loss and complications from a stroke. She faced these health challenges bravely and with an attitude that was always positive. She passed away in hospice care at Carondelet Village in St. Paul while holding the hand of dearly loved granddaughter Millicent Walsh. The family is grateful to the staff at Carondelet for the kind and attentive care they gave to Sharon over the last two years.

Although she was a St. Paul resident in her final days, and was the beloved wife and widow of a St. Paul man, the late USAF Col. Richard Walsh, she was a Minneapolis girl through and through and always joined playfully into the the endless rivalry about which of the Twin Cities was better. Her children, who were raised in Minneapolis, but crossed the river often to see their grandmother, aunts, uncles and cousins, were well versed in the many pros and cons of each city on the Mississippi and literally up to the last months of her life were joking with Sharon about the differences. In early August, as her two daughters strolled her in a wheel chair along the beautiful paths (St. Paul side!) near the limestone cliffs rising above the Mississippi in Highland Park, they remarked, gee, isn't St. Paul nice? Her reply, even through the mists of memory loss, was clear. "Minneapolis is more interesting," she pronounced, loyal to her girlhood city always. We had a good laugh.

Sharon was born on Nov. 2, 1932 in Minneapolis. She grew up near Kenwood Park in a prairie-style stucco house with a beautiful canopy of elms arching over a narrow street. She was the eldest of four, with three dear younger brothers; Tom, Michael and Bob and her late parents, Betty and Thomas Gallagher. The ice rink at Lake of the Isles was a block away in the winter, and from its glassy contours skaters could see the mansions of Midwestern grain barons lit up as the snow fell and as the blades of skates scratched patterns on the ice. With her "up the street friend" Jody she hid buried treasure on Raspberry Island on Lake of the Isles, and claimed that her brother tracked it down and

dug it up and spent it on ice cream in one of their many childhood capers.

At Northrop Collegiate School, she enjoyed theater, books and many friendships that would last all her life. After graduating in 1950, she set out on the train for Mt. Vernon College in Washington, D.C. with a suitcase full of tea-length evening dresses. After two years, she returned to complete her bachelor's degree at the University of Minnesota graduating in 1954. In 1953, she was introduced to a young U.S. Air Force Lieutenant and U.S. Naval Academy graduate with a handsome smile and dry wit, Richard Ambrose Walsh III of St. Paul. They married not long after her college graduation and she soon found herself driving the Al-Can Highway with her pilot husband toward Fairbanks, Alaska, where he was stationed at Ladd Air Force Base, and flew F-89s. Their first child was born there, and they then went on to assignments in Dayton, Ohio; Alexandria, Louisiana; the Philippines and Colorado Springs, Colorado. These were happy, busy years for the family.

In Colorado, Richard worked at the North American Air Defense (NORAD) command in the Cheyenne Mountain, and Sharon took care of their five young children, always with energy, love and songs - she seemed to know 1,000 of them. The Vietnam War was raging and as a career military officer, Richard responded when called to serve. He was shot down over Laos in 1969 during a mission to rescue another pilot. Richard was listed as missing in action. Sharon, with five children ages 6 to 13, became an anti-war activist and leader in the effort to account for the missing and prisoners of war. She took four of her five children on Ross Perot's 1969 "Spirit of Christmas" flight to Paris and joined the other MIA/POW families who sought unsuccessfully to talk to the North Vietnamese delegation at the Paris Peace Talks. She went to Vietnam and Laos with other wives and activists in 1970, entered graduate school in journalism, and spoke at rallies to end the war. In 1972 she campaigned for anti-war presidential candidate George McGovern and traveled the upper Midwest giving speeches on his behalf. As noted in a 1972 article in the Racine (Wisconsin) Journal-Times, Sharon's "verbal tongue lashings of President Nixon" caused some audience members to get up and walk out when she was talking. Sharon believed McGovern would end the war if elected. She also believed military families could be part of the peace movement with no disloyalty to their loved ones. She explained in her Wisconsin speech that her husband "was an idealistic, patriotic man who was a career officer for 18 years and what I'm doing is for him and others like him." Richard never returned and his status was changed to killed in action in 1979. All her life, Sharon advocated for information about his crash site and mourned the fact that his final resting place was so far from home. She was active for many years in the National League of Families and made many friends through this effort.

Sharon felt the loss of her husband deeply, but did not allow this to diminish her

appreciation of life. Nor did it dent her prodigious energy. She was a wonderful mother who encouraged her children to pursue their interests. The house was full of music coming from the piano, flute, guitars, banjo and dulcimer. It was never noise to her and she happily paid for the various music lessons, and drove her children to sporting practices, ski hills, play practices, and glee club and choral performances. Sharon also encouraged her children's studies and proudly celebrated graduations, and then weddings and the joyful arrival of grandchildren. While she raised her family, Sharon was assisted by the love of extended family who literally and figuratively wrapped their arms around us. She was always grateful to her siblings, her in-laws and her late father and mother for their kind support. Sunday dinners with aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins were a ritual and the feast rotated from house to house. Sharon's sweet rolls --made with her own mother's recipe-- were a favorite.

As her children grew, Sharon found her way into a career as a travel agent which she enjoyed. Several of her co-workers became close friends, and Sharon was able to go on many travel adventures with these and other friends, as well as family members who delighted when they got the call, how about a trip to Greece? Or Bermuda? Or France? She made regular journeys to visit her out of town children and grandchildren and was famous for arriving with treats in her suitcase when the grandkids were small--mini-packs of Cheetos and M&Ms and inexpensive grocery store books that made them squeal with delight.

Sharon leaves her five children Richard Brian Walsh (St. Paul), Michael Francis Walsh (Upland, CA), Maura Elizabeth Walsh (Maplewood NJ), Molly Kathryn Walsh (Burlington, VT), and Christopher Robert Walsh (Minneapolis, MN). She also leaves brother Thomas P. Gallagher of Edina, grandchildren Millicent Walsh, Amelia Walsh, Anna Moorhead, Richard Moorhead, Grace Cutts, Lillian Cutts and Tara Walsh-Baader; & son-in-law Arthur Moorhead. She was predeceased by her parents Elizabeth Gallagher and former Minnesota State Supreme Court Justice Thomas Gallagher, as well as her brothers Michael J. Gallagher and Robert B. Gallagher. She also leaves many beloved nephews, nieces and sisters and brothers-in-law.

Visitation will take place from 3 to 7 p.m. Thursday, October 29 at the Washburn-McReavy's Edina Chapel at 5000 W. 50th St. At Hwy 100. A Mass of Christian burial will take place at 2 p.m. Friday, October 30, at the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, with burial to follow at Lakewood Cemetery.

The family understand that with the pandemic some will not be able to attend and invites all who care to, to watch a live stream of the funeral at mary.online.church/

Social distancing and masks will be needed at the visitation and funeral.

Washburn-McReavy.com Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

Events

OCT **Visitation** 03:00PM - 07:00PM

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Washburn-McReavy's Edina Chapel
US

OCT **Mass of Christian Burial** 02:00PM

30

Basilica of St. Mary
Hennepin Ave. & 17th Street, Minneapolis, MN, US

Comments



“ My condolences to your beautiful family at this time. I worked with Sharon at Viking Travel for a few years in my younger days. Sharon became a true friend. Though we were decades apart in age, we were such close friends. We went to events together and spent time outside work dining out and more. She had a lovely mischievous quality that transcended her age. She was hilarious one minute and serious the next but always rock solid. We took a trip through Austria and Switzerland together. Sharon bought a darling coat that she just loved - it looked great on her - a splurge and I was delighted to see her indulge herself for once. She was always completely devoted to her family and the husband she lost but never forgot. She spoke with such a beautiful rhythm and truth. I could listen to her forever and be fascinated at her stories of life. I thank God for the brief time I spent with Sharon, and hope her family unites in this difficult time of goodbye - for her love & pride she had for each and every one of you was epic. Love and peace to you all.

Melanie Gilbertson - November 03, 2020 at 09:55 AM



“ Many prayers from Richard (Blue) Skroch and Jeanne Morales friends of Chris

Richard Skroch - November 02, 2020 at 11:01 AM



“ The members of the Thomas Lane Association extend deep condolences to Sharon's family. She was part of our family here at Thomas Lane and we will miss her very much.
She made us better in every way.

Margaret Telfer McConaghay - October 28, 2020 at 05:16 PM



“ Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Sharon Elizabeth Walsh.



October 28, 2020 at 12:29 PM



“ To my dearest cousins - Please accept my deepest sympathy at the loss of your Mom. Aunt Sharon was such an incredible person and such a fun, loving person to be around. I remember going to the Nankin restaurant with her and my SON sisters. It was the first time I had hot tea! She hosted many SONs, which often included watching an Elvis Presley movie on TV. She was always so kind to me and all of our wonderful family. I will certainly miss her. My love to you all, Rosemary Geist Furst

Rosemary Furst - October 28, 2020 at 08:29 AM



“ Love, Rosemary and Randy Furst purchased the Sweet Sincerity for the family of Sharon Elizabeth Walsh.



Love, Rosemary and Randy Furst - October 28, 2020 at 08:21 AM