



Mary Christine McKee

November 10, 1939 - December 14, 2018

Mary McKee Anderson, who served as Minnesota's first lady for six years, dies at 79, as the wife of former Minnesota Gov. Wendell Anderson, Mary McKee put her three children first throughout her husband's political career even though she had three degrees of her own.

"She tried to make sure we were out of the press," said one of her daughters, Amy Anderson. "She made sure we had more of a normal upbringing."

Anderson, who changed her name back to McKee after she and her husband divorced in 1990, died in her Plymouth home in mid-December. She was 79.

McKee was born in Bemidji in 1939. Her father, John, was a funeral home owner and director who also served as a state legislator throughout much of the 1950s and '60s. Norma, her mother, was active in the Girl Scouts, leading a troop and directing Scouts camp, according to a biography from her family.

McKee earned a degree in architecture at the University of Minnesota, the only woman in her class of 80. She returned to school for an education degree and taught for three years at Grant Elementary on the East Side of St. Paul

before returning to school again to earn a master's degree in home economics.

She met the future governor, who also earned acclaim as an Olympic hockey player, when she was working as a page for the Minnesota Legislature, her family said. The pair married and had three children: Amy Anderson, Elizabeth Crow and Brett Anderson.

Wendell Anderson was elected governor in 1970 and served for six years. During her time as first lady, McKee arranged her schedule so that public events took a few days a week and the others would be free to spend with her children.

McKee remembered with fondness a 1972 luncheon with presidential candidate George McGovern that included Hubert H. Humphrey and Walter Mondale as guests. It was guarded by 25 Secret Service agents.

Another time, McKee ate pecan pie on the porch with future President Jimmy Carter.

McKee also cited hosting royalty as a cherished memory, including Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon and King Carl Gustaf of Sweden.

In traveling to the National Governors Association conferences, McKee met many other first ladies and thought the network of women could benefit from sharing experiences with one another. She surveyed all of the first ladies and produced a pamphlet about the results in 1972.

After the Andersons divorced, she spent time with her young adult children while renovating her home in Plymouth, her family said. She worked as a radiology technician at HCMC part-time while she helped and enjoyed time with her grandchildren.

She was active in leadership of the Girl Scouts, serving on its National Board in the 1970s. She enjoyed several book clubs, theater at the Guthrie and concerts at Wayzata Community Church.

McKee's memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Jan. 5 at the Washburn-McReavy funeral home in Hopkins. Visitation is at 9:30 a.m.

www.Washburn-McReavy.com

Strobeck Johnson 952-938-9020

1400 Mainstreet, Hopkins

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 5. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (CT)

Hopkins Chapel
1400 Mainstreet
Hopkins, MN 55343
(952) 938-9020
info@washburn-mcreavy.com

Memorial Service

JAN 5. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Hopkins Chapel
1400 Mainstreet
Hopkins, MN 55343
(952) 938-9020
info@washburn-mcreavy.com

Tribute Wall

Jl

“ To her family and friends,

Please accept my belated condolences for the loss of your loved one, Mary Christine McKee. Because of unusual circumstances I only just recently learned of her passing.

Mary and I were cousins. Her father--my namesake--and my mother were brother and sister. Though Mary and I were both born in Bemidji, we were raised far apart during times when distance travel was not so common and constant nor as easily achieved as now. Still, somehow we managed to maintain a long-distance friendship over many years. She was--as all who knew her know--smart, beautiful, and funny, a delightfully charming person whom I was always proud to be related to.

Please know that, although belatedly, nonetheless I deeply mourn the passing of such a good friend and cousin. She was, as she said of her father several years ago at his memorial service, "a good deal." I will miss very much her presence in this world.

You have my love.

Sincerely,

John Henry Irsfeld

John Henry Irsfeld - November 08, 2022 at 03:55 PM

TO

“*Mary McKee and I were became friends at a dorm in 1957 and then as sorority sisters at the University of North Dakota where she attended one year. I missed not getting her Christmas card this year. They always told a story. I just happened to buy a Star Tribune that included her obituary.*

Mary M was beautiful inside and out. She and her roommate, Mary E, would not have won first place for neatness. Mary M would change clothes, leave them on the floor, and then pick them up a few days later, dress, and look fantastic. One time, Mary borrowed a friend's dress and looked so good in it that the friend refused to wear it again and insisted on giving it to her to keep instead.

One year when Wendy was running for office, I came to the cities to help stuff envelopes with brochures to be mailed. Some we delivered door to door. Mary had me fold the brochures so the person opening the envelope would see his lips first. i'm sure the women who received it took note and loved it. At that time, they lived in a small house where Wendy had also grown up. Mary made it look adorable.

Blessings to her children, who I know she loved deeply.

Treasure Soltis Omdahl

Treasure Omdahl - January 24, 2019 at 12:31 PM

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“ I knew Mary as the mom of my friend Amy. I love the write up that was shared about her wonderful life. I remember attempting to waterski on her home lake in the 1990's. I also have great memories touring the Parade of Homes twice each year moms and daughters. She was also generous to allow us to stay at her Florida condo. Mary sent me a Christmas card every year until this one and I loved seeing how proud she was of her kids and their families. My thoughts will be with all of you as you celebrate her life tomorrow and every day in the future. She was a classy beautiful woman and mom!

Christine Kohler (Haupt) - January 04, 2019 at 06:51 PM

MB

“ Peter Budge was a life-long friend as they attended the same elementary and high schools. Mary Fran Gravel Budge came into their lives in high school and also became part of the Bemidji High cohesive class of '57. We have many wonderful memories of friendship and fun. Mary was always ready with a smile, a story and wanting to share anecdotes of her kids and grandkids of whom she doted.
Please accept our heartfelt condolences.

Peter and Mary Budge

Mary F. Budge - January 03, 2019 at 09:25 AM