



Verna Mae Mills Painter

May 21, 1936 - March 26, 2022

Verna Mae Mills Painter died March 26, 2022, at the age of 85 in the memory care unit of Belmont Village Senior Living, Albany, California. Verna was born on May 21, 1936, and raised in Port Orchard, Washington, a small town on the Puget Sound just a ferry-ride from Seattle. Her family lived 5 miles or so inland, in Blackjack Valley, a rural, subsistence-farming area filled with immigrant families who had moved there within a few generations. She was the eldest of three children born to Clifford Claude Mills and Elnora Viola Kohler and grew up surrounded by a closely-knit extended family with grandparents living two houses away, and aunts, uncles, and cousins nearby. When describing her early life, Verna would say “We were poor, but we didn’t know it, because everyone else was in the same situation”.

She attended local schools and graduated from South Kitsap High School in 1954 having served as student body Treasurer in both her Junior and Senior years. (No one who knew Verna would be surprised about that!) After graduating from a two-year secretarial program, including shorthand and typing, Verna worked as a secretary for the US Naval Torpedo Station in Keyport, Washington. It was while working in Keyport that she met her future husband, Willard Painter. They married on May 5, 1956, in Port Orchard.

With Willie’s career in the US Navy already underway, the family moved regularly, which explains where their four children were born: daughter Sheryl in Bethesda, MD, sons Ronald and Kenneth in Oakland, CA, and daughter Dawn in Long Beach, CA. In 1970 Willard was transferred to Vietnam, prompting Verna and the four children to relocate to Truckee, where Willie’s parents, Carl and Lizzie Painter, had lived for decades.

During their time in Washington DC, Verna continued to work, this time as a secretary for Naval Intelligence. Although she put secretarial work aside as her family grew, she was involved in a variety of activities including being a Cub Scout Den Leader and President of the PTA for the elementary school in Long Beach for two years. She remembered attending the PTA state conference because she had to wear a hat and gloves (those were the 60s!). Later in Truckee, she served many years as Mother Advisor for the

Truckee Rainbow Girls.

After moving to Truckee, Verna began working again. First in the Truckee Library when it was still downtown. Then in November 1972 she began a 28-year career working for the Tahoe Truckee Unified School District. Typically, Verna worked in accounting-related jobs, but her final position was as executive secretary to the School Superintendent. Her happiest times though were the eight years she was the “office lady” at Truckee Elementary School. She loved knowing all the students, their parents, the teachers, and everything that went on in the school. In later years, she really enjoyed running into former students and parents at Safeway or the post office. Verna retired in June 2000.

The next decade offered opportunities to square dance and travel with her life-companion Bill Boling. Together they visited family and friends across the U.S., traveled to China and South Korea (she actually stood on the border between North and South Korea; one foot in each country), and cruised in Mexico. They also completed the multi-week, 6,000+ mile round-trip from Truckee to Alaska in an RV caravan. For several summers, Verna and Bill served as campground hosts at Boca Reservoir and South Lake Tahoe. She added these experiences to other travels with family and friends in Europe, Alaska, Hawaii, and Hong Kong.

Verna was handy with a needle and thread. When her children were young and budgets were tight, she sewed shirts and dresses. She could crochet and embroider. Later in life she also spent many hours completing cross-stich projects; and then moved on to creating beautiful quilts.

Verna loved the color red, the ferries that still ply the waters of Puget Sound, and of course “her” mountain, the one the rest of us call Mt. Rainier. Her favorite foods were primarily reminders of her childhood: salmon, clams, fried oysters, Dungeness crab (lobster?? no thanks.), apricots, vanilla tapioca pudding, pumpkin pie, raspberries (blueberries?? are you kidding, no taste whatsoever), cinnamon rolls, and “good” liver and onions. Of course, prime rib served with baked potatoes and sour cream, Diet Pepsi (never Diet Coke), and chile rellenos from her favorite Mexican restaurant were good choices too. Most people have an entire list of foods that they don’t like/won’t eat. Verna had just one culinary nemesis...raisins. It didn’t matter whether they were black or golden or pink with polka dots, no raisins, no way.

In October 2018 and suffering from the increasingly difficult symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease, Verna moved into the memory care unit of Belmont Village where she could receive the ongoing, daily support she needed.

Verna was preceded in death by her parents, brother Robert Mills, brother-in-law Robert Marcus, and her life partner Bill Boling. She is survived by her sister June Mills Marcus; sister-in-law Kinue Mills; four children Sheryl (husband Albert Totagrande), Ronald (wife Kay), Kenneth, and Dawn (wife Diana Foster); three grandsons Michael and Nicholas Totagrande and Joseph Painter; several nieces and nephews; and special friend Wayne Bosserdet.

A celebration of life is scheduled for Sunday, May 15 at River Ranch from 1:00 – 3:00. Verna will be buried in Port Orchard, Washington later this year.

Donations in Verna's memory may be made to the Truckee Elementary School Class Gardens Project (checks made out to TTUSD, c/o Ron Painter, P O Box 359, Colfax, CA 95713).

Our family would like to thank the team of care givers at Belmont Village and the individuals who supported Verna before her move to Albany, including Kari and Bernadette. In addition, we sincerely appreciate the assistance of Truckee-Tahoe Mortuary and Harris Funeral Home Legacy Center in Albany.

Tribute Wall

DJ

“ Prayers to Verna Painter family. I worked with Verna at Tahoe Truckee School District office for my last 7 years at the District. She always had a smile and she told us all how life and work was. No holding back but always so kind and caring to us all. I always loved her stories of her travels with Bill in their little camper. We were more than just co-workers at the school district office we became a family sharing our own stories, sharing time together and helping each other. Peace, Love and Faith....Debbie (Sanchez) Jojola

Debbie Jojola - May 19 at 10:37 AM

RS

“ Heartfelt condolences to Verna’s family. Verna was a wonderful, kind and welcoming face at Truckee Elementary. We enjoyed many visits in the downtown Truckee post office. Privileged to have known her. She will certainly be missed.

Tom & Bobbi Specht

Roberta Specht - May 10 at 07:13 PM

JJ

“ Verna was a vital part of the Truckee Elementary staff and one of my first connections to Truckee. I respected her efficiency and her wisdom. (She was always the “person in the know” for me.) I am thankful to have known her and I am sad to know that we are having to say goodbye to a very kind and generous soul.
Judy Jensen

judy jensen - May 04 at 11:22 PM

SR

I was her hairdresser and Truckee for many years she always had a smile and a laugh and QVC was her favorite shell anything and Reggie bought my thoughts and prayers go out to you Ron Kenny Dawn and Cheryl your mother was a pleasure to know we had many great dinners especially Mexican at being her favorite God bless Verna May she Rest In Peace ❤️🙏🌸

Shirley Reynolds - May 06 at 01:03 AM

KG

I have many fond memories of Verna helping me as a young teacher at Truckee Elementary and then again in her important work as assistant to our Superintendent. She was always kind and had time to help anyone. She seemed to really enjoy her work.

Kathleen Gauthier - May 06 at 08:15 AM

SP

I am so sad to hear about Verna, I worked very closely with her at the District Office. She amazed me with all the knowledge she carried around with her. She was always the one I would go to with questions. I loved working with her and just sitting and talking with her. She was one of the people who interviewed me for my job and always reminded me what I was wearing that day because I came in dressed to impress. I didn't even remember what I wore! She was such an amazing lady and the world has lost such a kind loving person. Love and prayers to her family.

Susie Pearce - May 06 at 01:23 PM

CK

I truly loved Verna. She was so kind to me while I lived with her. I will miss her greatly but I know she is in a good place now with all of her memories of Truckee, her family and loved ones. Bless her children for taking so good care of her!

Carolyn Keigley - May 14 at 12:13 PM

TL

This is sad news and my thoughts are with the entire Painter family, especially Ron and Kenny who I grew up with. those of us in Gateway remember her fondly - she kept an eye on us, made us lunch, and was always pleasant. I visited with her in 2009 during a visit "home".

tom lehner - June 01 at 03:52 PM



“ *What a beautiful memorial for Ms. Verna! I'm so sorry for her loss, she was one of the roots for this family. Not only her family and friends, but the school system definitely miss her and her dedication to them. We will miss sharing stories and fun times during holiday times with her. Thank you Sheryl for putting this together. Hopefully, people can add names and even dates to the pictures. With love, Wayne & Becky Pinckard*

Becky Pinckard - May 03 at 10:49 PM

RM

I've known Verna for years and worked with her when she was Superintendent's secretary. She always had a good story and a smile. Also loved chatting at the post office. What a wonderful lady! Love, Reina Markheim

Reina Markheim - May 17 at 10:39 AM

SP

“ 32 files added to the album *Family Photos*



Sheryl Painter - May 03 at 08:04 PM