



Dorothy Bonnell Stulberg Obituary

July 4, 1925 - September 3, 2011

Dorothy Bonnell Stulberg

"I figure I'm on my third journey. I was born, then there is life, and then there is spirit which goes on through others. The jury is out - will my third journey through others help them know and be a friend to themselves and love and relate to others?" Dorothy Stulberg 2011

Dorothy Bonnell Stulberg was born in Fort Dodge Iowa on July 4, 1925. She died last Saturday at the end of a life well-lived, leaving her spirit in the thousands of us she touched. During her life, she was active in many organizations including serving as Chairperson for Rural Legal Services (RLST) for 25+ years, Director of Neighborhood Youth Corps; Director and Chairperson of Anderson County Community Action; and lawyer and partner of her law firm, Mostoller & Stulberg, the first female-owned (and at the time female-staffed) law firm in Tennessee. At age 84 as Dorothy was closing her law practice, she began to volunteer at the University of Tennessee's Teaching and Learning Center. As the Center's designated Community Fellow, Dorothy reviewed key literature on teaching and learning and provided valuable insights into the planning of the Center's activities. She quickly became a great source of inspiration for the Center's faculty and staff. Mom was a life-long learner, which was demonstrated by her academic accomplishments including earning a B.S. from Iowa State University, classes at Purdue University as a Curtis Wright Cadette, a M.S. from the University of Minnesota where she also served as assistant professor, a J.D. from the University of Tennessee College of Law and at age 80, a doctorate in Collaborative Learning from the University of Tennessee. Mom believed in making the world a better place and when there was dialogue there was equal say.

Mom met our father, Melvin (Mel) P. Stulberg, in 1953 at the University of Minnesota. They were married on September 8, 1955, a union that will remain strong forever. If only all marriages could emulate theirs.

She lived through the Great Depression, and told her children of the "hobos" that would come to the door for food and who were never turned away. She saw social change in the South and we believe she helped initiate it. I vividly remember the day Martin Luther King

was shot. Mom gathered her children and drove to the segregated part of town where we marched with the community. To quote Chief Justice E. Riley Anderson, "The county had a legal aid program before RLST arrived – it was called Dorothy Stulberg, the 1999 Harris Gilbert Pro Bono Attorney of the Year... [she] assisted many of the county's most disadvantaged families while handling landmark litigation such as convincing Tennessee high school athletics authorities to end girls half-court basketball. Through her life and practice, she has exemplified how an attorney can use personal and professional skills to the benefit of the community." Mom and Dad are loyal Lady Vols fans and Mom used her legal skills to aid in the creation of the Lady Vols Boost-Her club, writing the charter and incorporation papers. Mom's name is in the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame for her contribution to the sport.

Although a devout Democrat, she had many friends of opposite political beliefs and political conversations could always be found at the dinner table, believing if we couldn't "talk" about our differences all was lost. We have to add that President Obama's full height cardboard statue still resides over the dinner table. She actively and tirelessly fought for all people's rights. When honored as "Woman of the Year " by EvaMag she was described as embodying "the voracious spirit it takes to make a difference in the world." Making a difference is what inspired her to go to law school. Mom said, "The reason I became a lawyer is because so many people are considered less than valuable. I believe in the value of human beings." Mom encouraged us to love each other and to be true to ourselves; she showered those around her with the purest unconditional love. She taught her children to always see the good in people. She was a devoted wife to our dad, and supported him in a way that is unmatched in today's society. They loved each other dearly. She had a number of lifelong friends and leaves her spirit in too many to name. Dorothy Bonnell Stulberg died after her brother, Jack Bonnell, and her parents Wayne E. Bonnell and Nell Anderson Bonnell. She is lovingly remembered by her sister Jean Bonnell Posey; her nephews, Steve Bonnell, John Bonnell and Steve Posey, and her nieces, Janie Brownlee, Susan Posey-Bergener, Peggy Stulberg and Mary Beth Stulberg; her daughters, Laurie Ann Macnair, Lynn Ellen (Ki) Stulberg and Lisa Jean Armstrong; and her sons-in-law, Mal Macnair and Gary Armstrong. She was so very proud of her children and grandchildren and always saw their gifts that sometimes others were too blind to see. She will live on in her granddaughter Jenna Macnair and grandsons Blake Macnair, Jack Armstrong and Nick Armstrong, and her kitty Sammy and her greyhound Freddie. In lieu of flowers, Mom asked for donations to any of the following charities; Tennessee Justice Center, 2nd Harvest Food Bank, Southern Poverty Law Center, Planned Parenthood, ACLU or League of Women Voters. Online condolences may be sent to Larmstrong_2005@msn.com. A celebration of Dorothy's life will be held at the Toyota Room at the Baker Center on the University of Tennessee campus this Sunday at 2:00 p.m. Mom wanted her friends and family together with laughter and tears.

Comments



“ I didn't know your mother, but I knew about her through the community. What a life she led. She also represented several fellow postal workers, when most lawyers wouldn't. God bless.

Patti Atkinson - Oak Ridge, TN - May 20, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ I remember fondly working in law enforcement and facing Dorothy in court. She was fiercely passionate in her work and believed in her client all the way. Dorothy was a formidable woman and deserved my respect. I know you will miss her, but her life had meaning.
Sincerely Bob Stoetzel,
Tennessee Highway Patrol Ret.

Bob Stoetzel - Woodbury , TN - admirer - September 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Best, Diedre Nation-Coleman

Diedre (Bodmer) Nation-Coleman - Nashville, TN - friend - September 14, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ We wish to express our sincere sympathy on the passing of Mrs. Stulberg . Please know that we are keeping your family in our prayers.

Rosie Hodges & Pearl Robinson

Rosie Hodges and Pearl Robinson - Oak Ridge, TN - September 11, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ I first met Dorothy back in the 80's and was immediately struck by her strong resolve to represent those who had no voice. She was always available to answer questions or give guidance.

Mary Lou Seamon - September 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dorothy,

Like so many other people, you touched my life many times through the years in special ways. You were not only a mentor, but even more importantly, a sweet friend. I will fondly remember the times that we shared on those working Saturday mornings. You always treated everyone with equal kindness and respect and you had a burning desire to help promote justice to those that rarely saw it.

I will miss you very much and send my condolences to your family.

Love,

Chuck Buckholts

Chuck Buckholts - Hermitage, TN - Friend/Former Associate - September 10, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Lynn, It saddens me to see that your mother has passed. Reading her obit made me think about when we were kids going to school as far back as Robertsville. You spoke highly of your mother back then, and reading her story has me in total agreement. If you looked up "A life well lived", there would be a picture of your mother.

I haven't seen you in years, but I want you to know that you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

TJ Nugent

TJ Nugent - Nashville, TN - Friend - September 09, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ My Deepest Sympathy.

Cathy Daugherty - Lafayette, TN - Friend - September 09, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Lynn,

So sorry to hear about your mother. My your memories give you peace during this time. Jane

Jane Holt Damiano - Powell, TN - September 08, 2011 at 12:00 AM



“ Dorothy, I know you are soaring with the angels. You will be greatly missed on down here. Godspeed.

Deborah Donohue - Knoxville, TN - Friend - September 08, 2011 at 12:00 AM