

# Bessie Bocock Carter

1929-2008

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Winchester-Clarke Garden Club



*Bessie Bocock Carter*

"For her generosity, humor, and commitment to conservation" is engraved on the Massie Medal awarded (2006) to Bessie Carter who died Friday, October 10, 2008 in Charlottesville. President of The Garden Club of Virginia (1998-2000), after having served as chairman of the Conservation Committee and the Massie Medal Committee and as second vice-president, she was later Chairman of the Restoration Committee (2002-2004). She was born in Richmond, graduated from St. Timothy's School and Vassar College, and married the late Robert Carter in October 1951. They brought up three sons, Robert Hill Carter, John Bocock Carter, and Andrew Beirne Carter, in Richmond, spending more time later at Redlands, the Carter family home outside

Charlottesville. She adored her three daughters-in-law, eight grandchildren, and fourteen nieces and nephews, along with her brother, Frederic S. Bocock, sister, Mary Buford Hitz, and countless friends.

Her appreciation for the natural beauty of the world informed her achievement as chairman of The Garden Club of America National Affairs and Legislation committee, founding member of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters and the Council of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and member of the boards of the Virginia Chapter of the Nature Conservancy and the Piedmont Environmental Council. To this public life she brought inborn tact and a honed intellect. One Virginia legislator said he always welcomed her as a lobbyist because she understood the issues and educated him. The citation for her deLacy Gray Medal for conservation (1991) called her "a catalyst for environmental action in Virginia and indeed across the nation."

She wore gifts and honors lightly. She directed an impish wit at herself, calling herself "trash lady" as recycling advocate and "weed queen" as GCV president, and signing her emails "Goofy," in what a family connection called "merry humility." She loved to arrange flowers, competing only on the tennis court; to take long walks, tempering her pace to her companions'; to help, instinctively eschewing intrusion. She relished, and elicited, lively conversation and, in her words, liked feeding people, whether in an elegant dining room, a pastoral al fresco, or a basement kitchen where her role became chef as well as hostess. Her warmth permeated Redlands: luncheons, dinners, house parties, Historic Garden Week tours and meetings extended her friendships throughout Virginia and beyond. "She enfolded us all," said a relatively new friend at Redlands after her funeral (October 13; Christ Church, Keene).

"Whatever she gave, she had a special way of making her gifts seem to come, not from her private strength, but fresh from her common creator," wrote Dr. Hunter H. McGuire, Jr., in words read to the family. "Bessie was, and is, far more than most of us a child and agent of God."