

## Tribute to Former GCV President Virginia Brown Guild

by Helen Murphy, the Garden Club of the Northern Neck

Before I begin, I should like to say that I have quoted extensively from her obituary and Follow the Green Arrow II, and in one case, I am actually quoting myself!

When she was elected President, Mrs. Guild, Past President of the Hunting Creek Garden Club, was well known to most of the members of GCV as she had for some time, been giving talks to other member clubs. She was a knowledgeable horticulturist, expert flower arranger and artistic judge. She supplied exquisite arrangements of flowers, that she carefully dried herself, to the Diplomatic Reception Rooms at the State Department and to the Kent-Valentine House. She held many chairmanships and offices and was an extremely popular choice to be President. Shortly after her election, she said, "I consider this the greatest honor I have ever received -- a native Virginian, I was born knowing about the Garden Club of Virginia."

Mrs. Guild was tall and handsome. She exemplified the true spirit of a Virginia lady. Beautiful inside and out, her smile could light up a room. In addition to her flower talents, she knit beautifully, cooked expertly and sewed most of her own clothes, including tailored jackets that a designer would be proud to wear.

I have never known a more devoted couple than Virginia and Henley, to whom she was married for more than 65 years! They had three children and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As are most husbands of GCV Presidents, Henley was very supportive of the club. Summer board meetings customarily include the husbands, and one year he designed caps which said, 'GCV Men's Auxiliary' for all members.

A memorable event of Virginia's presidency was when the Restoration Committee met at Royal Orchard, a large Gothic structure in the mountains. It was Halloween, and the entire committee, including Mr. Favretti, then the landscape architect of the GCV, appeared for dinner in costume. He was a pirate with a trowel hook hand, Virginia was a very lovely devil, and I was told, appropriately dressed as a crab! Shortly after that, Virginia had emergency heart surgery but missed very few beats as it was the beginning of the holiday season and a light schedule.

Much was accomplished during Virginia's term as President about which one can read in Follow the Green Arrow II, but in her modest way, she told me one time, "Helen, I'm just trying to keep it together for two years." She did way more than that, and her very evident love for the organization was matched by its' members devotion to her. In 1997, the GCV awarded her their highest honor, the Massie Medal for Distinguished Achievement. It is aptly inscribed, "Virginia Brown Guild; a giver of self and a gracious and gifted leader."

Throughout her life, Virginia gave generously of her time, her many talents and her unconditional love to her family and friends. Everything she did was in an unassuming manner with elegance, grace, her wonderful sense of humor and that beautiful smile. I feel very sorry for those of you who didn't know Virginia Guild.