



Marie Langley Ruffin

July 12, 1925 - December 1, 2020

OBIT MARIE LANGLEY RUFFIN

(Thelma) Marie Langley Ruffin died on December 1, 2020, of Covid-19. Since 2016, she was cared for at the Oaks at Mayview, Raleigh, until she died. Thelma Marie Langley was born on July 12, 1925. She disliked the name Thelma, and never used it. Her mother, Thelma Batts Langley, was a clever and tenacious woman. She was a homemaker, but quite the businesswoman behind the businessman. Marie's father was Arthur William Langley, a tough old guy, who was the farmer and businessman, but he had too big of a heart sometimes!

She was born and grew up on a tobacco farm in Richlands, North Carolina, not far from Jacksonville. She was the oldest of three. Her brother Arthur Junior (Art) and sister Patricia (Patsy) were the apple of her eye!

In high school, when Marie was working in her father's general store, a polite, young Schlitz Beer truck driver, Cecil Kelly Ruffin, stopped by for a cold drink. Coincidentally, he did not like his first or middle name either, and later became known as Sam. In 1942, they slipped away to Marion, North Carolina, and married when she was just 17. One wonders what they talked about on that six-hour drive to the mountains.

In 1946, their first child, Darrell Cecil was born. Cecil (Sam) owned a Gulf Station in Jacksonville, but was called on active duty in 1950, at the beginning of the Korean Conflict. He was inducted into the Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In 1951, their second child, Marsha Marie was born. In that same year, Marie's parents and siblings built and moved into a new house in Jacksonville. This wonderful home, full of memories and stories, is still occupied by the Langley family!

When Cecil returned from Pusan, Korea, more Army assignments followed. TOD or "Tour of Duty" was an assignment for the soldier. When the family could not travel with the sponsor, this was called a "hardship tour". There were no other hardship tours until Viet Nam for Cecil. Before Marsha was born, the family of three, had assignments at Camp Barkeley, in Abilene, Texas, and Fort Lewis in Pierce, Washington. Later, the European

assignments began. There were three tours in Germany, between 1955 and 1967. They were Babenhausen, Frankfurt am Main, and Mannheim. In between these European tours, were the stateside assignments, Fort Rucker, near Enterprise, Alabama, Fort Gordon, in Augusta Georgia, and of course, Fort Bragg, in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Being in the military is not only a job, it is a life and a lifestyle. It is not for everyone. This family of four, loved the military life, moving, making new friends, new schools, visiting other countries, trying new foods and customs, learning languages, and travel! Marie enjoyed being an Officer's wife and what that meant for the family. She especially enjoyed entertaining, because she was able to show off her beautiful antiques, her precious German tea sets, silver demitasse spoons, and her prized German silver service, hand made by Herr Furner. Even though she was not fond of cooking, she sure knew how to have a party, a coffee, a tea, or a luncheon. In the 1950s/early 60s, "Come As You Are" parties were a popular event too.

Very few married women were in the service overseas then, so most spouses were women. Frequently the humor at the time revolved around, "If the military wanted you to have a wife and kids, they would have issued them to you!" This meant that the women and children had to be kept entertained and busy. There was a steady stream of classes for the ladies to partake of, from hula dancing or hat making , to language lessons or book clubs. Marie loved it all, except the part about being separated from family three years at a time. When her father died in January one year, in tears, she waited a week at the Rhine Main Airport, trying to get a space available flight to the United States. The flights were all booked. She finally went back home to Sam and her family. She was unable to visit her father's grave for several years. That would be one of the few times she was unhappy in the family of the military.

She was at her best, when with her family, being with friends, traveling, or especially dancing and dining at the Officer's Club. On weekends, she was thrilled to take a day trip to wander in the ruins of one of Germany's many castles or just walking in some of the picturesque small German towns. Marie and Sam never tired of German restaurants or spending time with German friends. But, Christmastime in Germany was the best treat of all!

In 1967, after nearly nine and a half years in Germany, Marie, Sam and Marsha settled at Fort Bragg, and later a home, in Fayetteville. They settled into their surroundings, on post and later in civilian life too. They joined First Baptist Church in Fayetteville. There were only a few civilian churches in their life after leaving Jacksonville, but many non-denominational military chapels. They loved this church in Fayetteville though! It felt like

home to them. Over the decades, they welcomed many cats, and a few dogs to their family, who were a great source of joy and companionship. Grandchildren were added too.

In the summer of 1968, there was a family life-changing tragedy. Darrell was in the Air Force, assigned to Dover AFB in Delaware. He was visiting friends in Philadelphia, riding his new Kawasaki motorcycle, and nearly died in a horrific motorcycle accident.

Pennsylvania had a helmet law, or Darrell would not have lived. He was thrown 40 feet and broke 16 bones and was in three different hospitals, in three states, for 15 months. For many of those months, he was in a full body cast, except for his head, right shoulder and arm. This moment in time, forever changed Darrell's life and the family's as well. Literally, motorcycle, was not a word that Marie ever wanted to hear again.

In September 1968, Sam was assigned to DaNang, Viet Nam. He was there for 15 months. Marie and Sam wrote to each other, daily. It was a painful time for Marie, war stories dominated the news came then. When he returned, the Army told him he would be back in Viet Nam within six months. He said, no thanks, and put in for his retirement. Korea was a horrible experience, but Viet Nam was worse. This was not a duty he felt called to, for a second time. He took his work seriously and was dedicated to it, but he was no war monger, and this was the end of the military line for him. From leaving school in Wilson, North Carolina in at the age of 11, to rising to the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4, was monumental. Truly.

In 1969, Sam's retirement ceremony was held under the same tree at Fort Bragg, where he was inducted into the Army, in 1950. It was a long, punishing road becoming a civilian, after 30 years in the military. The military was their primary social life. Actually, it was devastating for them. Like many other issues in life, it does not matter how much one prepares, when the time comes, it is usually far more to untangle, than envisioned.

In January 2000, Sam died. He had several heart attacks and strokes in the previous two years. He was a proud Army man with a big heart. He rose up through the ranks with only a sixth-grade education, when he was needed to work to support his mother and five siblings. His father had died years earlier. His military commendations and ribbons were many, including three Bronze Stars and an Army Commendation Medal.

Marie stayed in Fayetteville until 2002, when she moved to Cary. Both Darrell and Marsha were each married and living in the area. Once she picked out a townhome and a beauty parlor, she could get settled! Then she bought a cat from Cat Angels Pet Adoptions and was happy.

In 2010, some decline began for Marie. She fell several times too. Marie was so grateful

for all the house and yard assistance from her son in law, Richard Adkins. Darrell, Marsha, and Marci were on call frequently, as were the three grandchildren, Kendall, Morgan, and Meghan. The family wishes to thank Dr. Dunlap, The nurses, CNAs, assistants, and staff at the Oaks of Mayview in Raleigh, for their love and kindness, since January 21, 2016. In the end, Covid-19 claimed her quickly. Darrell and Marsha had not seen her since March 2. This was particularly sad.

Marie was a kind and thoughtful wife, a nurturing mother and grandmother, and a loving sister and friend. She had such a soft heart for animals, especially cats. She always enjoyed the family dogs, Sadie, Lucy and Maddy, visiting her at Mayview.

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he was preceded in death by her parents, Arthur and Thelma Langley, her brother, Art and her sister, Patsy. Patsy was predeceased by her daughter Anna, and Anna's daughter, Jennifer. There are many aunts, uncles and cousins who passed on before Marie did, as well. She had good genes, as her mother was 104 & 11 months when she left this earth 10 years ago.

Marie is survived by her son, Darrell Cecil Ruffin, and his wife Marcia Lynn White. Marie is also survived by her daughter, Marsha Marie Ruffin Adkins, her husband, Richard, their daughters, Kendall Marie McCormick , Morgan McCormick , Meghan Marie Adkins, and her bonus daughter Alexandra Heleni Neale. Marie is also survived by her brother 's (Art) son, Jay Langley and Jay's two daughters, Rachel and Amanda, and their families. She is also survived by her sister's (Patsy) children, Michael and his wife, Karen Cape; Danny Cape and Danny's daughters, Sara Cape Biros, her husband Kory and their three children, as well as Samantha Cape and her daughter Bella. She is also survived by the youngest of Patsy's daughters, Leah Fitzgerald, her husband, Harry and their children, Harry IV, Ashley, Zachary, and Lauren.

A celebration of her life will be held later. In lieu of flowers, the family requests you donate, in her memory, to Cat Angels Pet Adoptions, 959 N. Harrison Ave, Cary, NC 27513 or your local no-kill shelter.