



# Georgyee Watson Burke

APR 10, 1919 - APR 16, 2016



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**G**eorgyee Juanita Watson Burke, née Johnson died in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 16 in Covington, Louisiana, six days after celebrating her 97th birthday. Her beloved granddaughter Alexandra Margaret Watson was married that same evening, and it has been suggested that having been told that she was too weak to attend, she decided it was time to go to ensure she had a good seat for the wedding.

Georgyee was born on April 10, 1919, on a farm near Windom, Kansas to Iver Johnson, a Swedish immigrant, and Anna Zook Johnson. She was the third of five siblings. She and her sister Zelpha, older than Georgyee by just one year, started school together and were inseparable growing up.

The summer after Georgyee and Zelpha graduated from Windom High School, they moved to Houston to live with Herbert J. “Kem” Kemler and his wife Sara Webb “Billie” Kemler. Billie and Kem became a second set of parents to both girls, and “Billie Gran” would become a third grandmother to Georgyee’s sons. During this time, Georgyee attended Houston Business School and secured employment as a secretary in Houston.

On December 7, 1941, as the country was in shock from the attack on Pearl Harbor, Georgyee had a blind date with a young Shell geologist, John Gaul Watson. They married on December 31, 1942. In 1943, John was transferred to Shreveport, Louisiana, where Georgyee and John’s first child, John Stuart, was born in 1948. Later that year, the family moved to New Orleans, where Harold Kemler “Hal” was born in 1950.

In 1960, the family moved to Tchefuncta Club Estates in Covington, Louisiana, where Georgyee would become a pillar of the community. In 1964, John developed severe angina and had to retire from Shell, and Georgyee went into the real estate business to support the family. For the next three and a half decades, she was one of the most successful real estate agents in Covington, particularly in Tchefuncta. Her success was the result not merely of hard work, but of the interest she took in making sure her clients became integrated into the community. The way her clients



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felt about her is perhaps best represented by a testimonial that was given by a former client at her 90th birthday party, who informed those present that while returning from a family vacation in Colorado, they had driven hundreds of miles out of their way to see the small town in Kansas where Georgyee had grown up. Georgyee published a telephone directory for Tchefuncta for many years, and co-authored a history of Tchefuncta.

In 1971, John died after having open heart surgery. John's parents, John and Bella Watson ("Gaga" and "Pa" to the Watson boys), had moved in when the family had moved to New Orleans in 1948, and Pa had died in 1969, but Georgyee would care for Gaga until her death in 1978. The last year or so of her life was spent in a nursing home, and Georgyee would faithfully bring her an Old Fashioned every afternoon.

In 1972, Georgyee married the second great love of her life, James Edmund "Jim" Burke. Georgyee and Jim had an extremely happy marriage until his death in 2009. They loved traveling, spending summers in the mountains of North Carolina, playing bridge and dancing, but especially just caring for each other and showing love to their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Georgyee was passionate about the game of golf, and was the Tchefuncta Country Club champion 7 times between 1962 and 1991.

Georgyee was a devoted Christian. Originally raised as a Methodist, she became a Presbyterian in 1960 when the family moved to Covington so everyone could attend the same church along with John's Scottish Presbyterian parents. Georgyee was an active member of Covington Presbyterian, singing in the choir and serving as an elder along with her second husband Jim. Georgyee and Jim then joined the Episcopal Church, following Jim's original faith; they were active members of Christ Church, Covington, where Georgyee sang in the choir for many years.

Georgyee is preceded in death by her parents, siblings Verda Johnson Opperman (Ivan), Zelpha Johnson Orfield (Horace), Donnagene Johnson Rosser (Norman), and Harold Johnson (Geraldine) (Irma), and husbands John and Jim. She is survived by her son Stuart and his wife Joann Larson, her son Hal and his wife Shari Watson; her grandchildren Rachel Suzanne Larson, Kirsten Rebecca Watson and her wife Courtney Longua, John Lenode Watson and his wife Darcy Bairen, Thomas Stuart Watson and his wife Audrey Ryman, Alexandra Margaret Watson and her husband Anthony Borreca; and her great grandchildren Connor Andrew O'Leary, Sydney Caitlin O'Leary and Jude Fitzgerald Watson. She is also survived by Jim's children, whom she loved as her own,



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Elizabeth "Liz" Burke Cifani, Anne L. Burke Watson, and James Edmund Burke III, grandchildren Anthony "Tony" Cifani, James Burke, Peter Burke, and great grandchild Samuel Lewis Cifani.

The family would like to express their appreciation to the staff of Christwood Retirement Community and Hospice of Notre Dame for the loving care they provided to Georgyee.

A celebration of Holy Eucharist in thanksgiving for the life and in memory of Georgyee Burke will be held at 10 o'clock in the morning on Wednesday, April 20 at Christ Church, 120 S. New Hampshire St., Covington, LA 70433. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that donations be made to Christwood Foundation/John Lohman Fund or Employee Benevolent Fund.

May she rest in peace, and rise in glory.

E. J. Fielding Funeral Home, 2260 W. 21st Ave., Covington, LA 70433 has been entrusted with the arrangements. Please sign the online guestbook at [www.ejfieldingfh.com](http://www.ejfieldingfh.com).




# Events


**Georgyee Watson Burke**

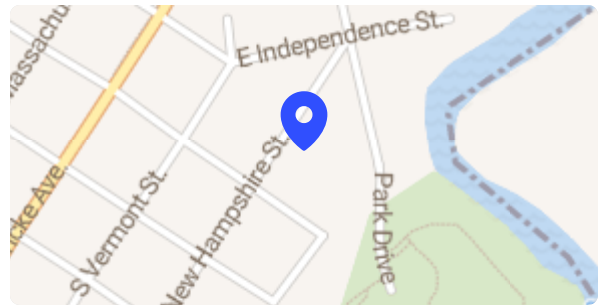
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## Funeral Services

 **Wednesday**, April 20, 2016

 10:00 AM CT

 **Christ Episcopal Church**  
120 S. New Hampshire Street, Covington LA  
70433





## Tribute Wall

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DT

**D. Tyler** posted:

Deep condolences to the Burke family. It seems as if your family have so many good memories to focus on to help with loss of your loved one. May your family gain strength daily to endure. 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

April 20 at 12:57 PM

BH

**Blanche Harrison** posted:

Georgyee was a wonderful lady. I loved visiting with her. She was totally engaged and active in her church and community. I will miss her. I know that she, indeed, managed to attend Alexandra and Anthony's wedding, sitting in the best seat in the cathedral. My thoughts and prayers are with the Watson and Burke families. God be with each of you as you adjust to this change in your lives. Georgyee, you've completed earth's journey. May you rest in peace. My love to all, Blanche Harrison

April 20 at 6:42 AM

BM

**Becky McWilliams** posted:

Georgyee was such a loving, wonderful, giving woman. She has given us so many great memories of our Tchefuncta days and, she will be greatly missed. I know there are so many that are welcoming her into God's Kingdom. My prayers are with your family now. Becky McWilliams

April 20 at 5:08 AM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Georgyee by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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