



Norma E. Griner

November 1, 1930 - June 6, 2022

Norma Elizabeth Dungee was the only child of her parents, Lygia Calantha Cross Dungee and Roger Benton Dungee, Sr., and she had 2 stepsisters and 2 stepbrothers by her father. Her parents divorced when she was very young. From then on she attended school in Philadelphia and spent time with her Wilmington, Delaware cousins in the winter, and stayed with her father in the summer. She took the train from Philly where her mother made certain Norma was watched over by a conductor and seated in the Jim Crow car so she wouldn't have to change cars at the Mason Dixon Line on her way to Norfolk, Virginia.

Norma was bright, very bright. She skipped several elementary grades and attended the prestigious Philadelphia Girls' High School. She graduated from Temple University with a degree in German and a teaching certification. The National Security Agency hired her to work in Washington D.C. as a civilian employee. She was trained to decode Russian because of her affinity for languages having already studied Latin, French, and German.

She married Air Force NSA decoder Howard Griner September 1954 and had their first child, Elizabeth in 1955. Shortly after Howard was stationed in Wiesbaden, Germany. They lived outside the base in Darmstadt and sent Elizabeth to a German Kindergarten. Norma taught English at a Berlitz school and gave talks on Negro Life in the USA. Their 2nd child, Lawrence was born there in February 1959 just before Howard was transferred to San Angelo, Texas. Their 3rd child, Howard Joseph was born in 1960 while Norma was visiting her mom in Harrisburg. Another transfer to Fort Meade, Maryland brought the family to the home they bought in Baltimore. Their 4th child, Jeffrey was born in 1965.

Both Howard and Norma were "strict". One of us gave Norma a mug with the following poem:

A mean mother never allows candy or sweets to take the place of a well-balanced meal.
A mean mother insists on knowing where her children are at all times, who their friends are and what they do.

A mean mother breaks the child labor law by making her children work. . .

washing dishes, making beds, learning to cook, cleaning the bathroom, and doing other

chores.

A mean mother makes life miserable for her offspring by insisting that they always tell the truth.

A mean mother produces teenagers who are wiser and more sensible.

A mean mother can smile with secret delight and pride when she hears her own grandchildren call their parents "mean."

Mom emphasized education. Homework first. She would help with difficult math problems. She was a PTA officer. All of us were expected to study something cultural - any instrument or dance. My brothers were Jr. Orioles. We attended Resident and Day Camp, participated in Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, sports teams, and Red Shield Indian Dancers. We attended Sunday School. She was a Girl Scout leader for a troop at her church for several years and volunteered to tutor children at an afterschool program.

Family was important to Mom and we frequently visited with them for holidays and whenever possible. Our relatives instilled in us a history of family, of civil rights, and an understanding current events. Even when Mom & Dad divorced, we stayed in touch with both sides of the family.

Norma started working at the Social Security Administration in claims, shortly after moving to Baltimore. She jumped at the opportunity to train and work with computers when the government first installed them. While still working at SSA, she completed a master's degree in Business Administration through George Washington University classes held at the Social Security building. (She had applied and been denied acceptance to classes at the GWU campus because of her race.)

In the years just prior to and after Mom's retirement in 1988 we had trouble getting hold of her. (Remember no cell phones then.) She was no couch potato. Two nights a week she had choir practice. She traveled frequently to musical venues like the Lincoln Center in NYC for opera and the Kennedy Center in DC for all sorts of performances. Dragging Jeffrey along, she spent weeks at Tanglewood in Massachusetts for concerts and workshops and the opportunity to sit in on rehearsals conducted by Leonard Bernstein. She attended Wagner's The Ring Operas Series in Seattle and drove the Pacific Highway south to San Francisco by herself enjoying the Pacific west coast scenery. She made the mistake of buying a bunch of fruit in Oregon which she couldn't take into California. She sat in the rest area in Oregon and ate as much as she could and gave the rest to the attendants. For more than 8 years she attended the week-long Berkshire Choral Festival Music camp for adults in Massachusetts, Austria, or London.

Mom's biggest undertaking (besides raising 4 kids) was serving in the Peace Corp after retiring. The opportunity was a dream deferred since Pres. Kennedy had announced the program at its beginning. She taught English to medical students in Morocco, North Africa for 2 years.

Her interests were many. Like her music, Mom loved flowers and gardening. Over the years she grew many different types and shades of flowers both inside and out. In 1966 she had 52 different rose bushes and provided every girl graduating in Elizabeth's class with a rose.

Her musical participation grew as we aged, and she found more time for herself. We lived through opera every Saturday afternoon "Live from the Metropolitan Opera" on the radio. Then she started subscribing to the Baltimore Symphony at both the Lyric Theatre and then the Meyerhoff and joined the Baltimore Symphony Chorus in 1976. She sang with the chorus for 24 years and was grief stricken when it was disbanded in 2002. The Baltimore Sun paper did a full-page article on Mom being the last original member of the BSO chorus in 2002. Norma enjoyed and was quite talented at knitting, crocheting and hooking rugs. She also dabbled for a while with bargello and needlepoint.

Because of her interest in civil rights, she joined the Baltimore Neighborhoods

Cemetery Details

Arbutus Memorial Park Cemetery

1101 Sulphur Spring Road
Baltimore, MD 21227

Previous Events

Public Viewing

JUN **14**. 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home - West
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215

Wake

JUN **15**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Grace Presbyterian
2604 Banister Rd
Baltimore, MD

Service

JUN **15**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Grace Presbyterian
2604 Banister Rd
Baltimore, MD

Tribute Wall

MH

“ Norma, was a beautiful person, she has entertained many people in the park with her singing, and her son Larry kept her busy with her music, singing and moving to the music. And I thought I loved Chocolate, Norma I think you have me beat. Every time I have chocolate ice cream I think of Larry telling you “ mom mom don’t leave no chocolate in that bowl. Larry, you were a devoted son, you kept Norma going, you never just let her wither away. This is going to be hard now that she is gone, you will have so much time on your hands, when my mom passed I was lost without her.. But I will miss your mom, but she is now in Heaven directing the choir RIP Norma, and I know I will hear you singing for your chocolate And Larry things will be different for you, But you have lots of beautiful memories of your mom and she will always be in your Heart. ❤️🌹



Marianne Houseman - June 15 at 03:16 PM

CF

“ Thank You Mrs. Griner for all of the life lessons you taught me and how to conduct myself as a respectable young lady. You introduced the various arts and cultures that I don’t believe that I would have indulged into otherwise. Being a product myself of Baltimore’s inner city, compared to so many others, I knew I wanted so much more from this life and I got it. I explored the job market for the good jobs and landed some and traveled quite a bit. I explored other cultures and learned to appreciate the various aspects of foreign cultures and wanted my children to do the same. If not for You Mrs. Griner, my world would have been dull and boring and I also want to Thank You for being the BEST Girl Scout Leader in the world!! I’m just sorry that I missed the chance to tell You these things in person. Although You are gone...You will never be forgotten for the affection and generosity of your life is all over me and for this I Thank You. You will always be a pretty fine lady in my book and You will be truly missed. Elizabeth, Lawrence, Howard and Jeffry we love you dearly. You are the best neighbors we could ever have. God bless You all and I pray that He gives You peace Always.
Carolyn Fair-Felder of Nurton Avenue

Carolyn Felder - June 15 at 12:09 AM

SS

“ My heart and prayers go out to Larry and his family. What a jewel of a woman. You ALL took such wonderful care of her and will be blessed beyond measure. Take your earned rest and may your BS hour journeys forward have peaceful days and nights, full of purpose.

Susan K. Scott - June 14 at 10:40 AM

CY

“ *My prayers are with your family. Omg how we loved hearing you sing for your chocolate. You sang it, miss Norma. You are and will be remembered by all.*



cathy young - June 13 at 07:56 AM

PT

“ *Singing with Norma in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Chorus was the most marvelous experience. She was my hero - in music and in life. She was endlessly patient with my impossible German pronunciations. And she encouraged the career change that took me away from the chorus. Her Peace Corp service was an example of how to be useful and adventurous at the end of one's career. The joy she brought to so many people is a legacy that will outlive the deep sorrow of her passing. My sincerest condolences to Norma's children and caregivers.*

Patty Trujillo - June 12 at 02:37 PM

LW

“ *Mrs.Griner, I never meet you but you brightened my days over the past few years. I know you are leading a chorus up in heaven with our Lord. God bless you for sharing your love with all of us! To all of her children, your mom was a wonderful person. May God envelop you and give you peace and comfort. Larry, thank you for sharing your mom with us. My prayers are with all of you!*



Lisa Wade - June 12 at 01:48 PM

GB

“ *I offer my heartfelt condolences to the Ms. Norma's family. May the memories she left sustain you in the days ahead. Rest in peace Sweet Lady. I'm going to miss you, my Luvbug.*

Gayle Chapman Betts - June 11 at 10:51 PM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Funeral Homes - June 11 at 12:06 PM