



## Mrs. Rita Jones

October 31, 1935 - December 4, 2024

Rita Loyola Burke Jones passed away peacefully in her beloved Westberry St. home the morning of Wednesday, December 4, 2024. Quiet music was playing and Little David and Lane were holding her hand.

Strong and healthy for 88 of her 89 years Rita had been on a pontoon boat crossing a sparkling Maine lake with the sun on her face and the wind in her hair not so very long ago. Now she is lifted up by "Team Rita" and the pure love of family and friends.

Visitation will be held at Banks Funeral Home in Sylvester Georgia on Friday, December 13 from 4 PM to 6 PM.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, December 14 at Pinson Memorial Methodist Church Sanctuary at 11 AM with a Luncheon to follow at the Sylvester Woman's Club/Alford Historic Home where all are invited to celebrate an extraordinary life with smiles and laughter.

Flowers are optional and any memorials may be made to the Margaret M. Jones Library.

Rita was born to the late Eugene Stewart Burke and Blonnie Royal Burke on October 31, 1935. My guess is she had a big irresistible smile on her face from the moment she arrived!

That "Rita smile" :-)!

Rita was preceded in death by her parents, her Husband David C. Jones, Sr. and Sisters Blonnie Burke Farmer and Myra Burke Hatfield.

She is survived by her Son Dr. David C. Jones, Jr and Daughter-in-law Lane Seabolt Jones, Nephew Darren Lee James (Donna) and daughters Mallory and Kinsey, Niece Audrey James Yeatts and children Jason, Kayla and Whitney, Nephew Mark Fowler (Wendy)) and Sons Logan, Austin, Rylan and Mason, Nephew Chad Fowler (Maya) and Son Max, Niece Kim Sorenson and Daughter Zoe, Niece Dixie Gay (Carl) and a growing group of great nieces, great nephews and loving family.

Her parents separated when she and her baby sister Blonnie were quite young leaving her father a single dad. Traveling statewide for his work with the early Georgia State Patrol Lieutenant Colonel Burke needed help with his two girls so for a time they boarded in turn with "Boo" Cooper in Pavo" and "Mama" Shell in Sylvester. Each of these homes were brimming full of love and Rita always said most people only get one mother while she was blessed with three! Rita held Blonnie's little hand tight through these years until their dad remarried and they had yet another loving Mom. Olga Burke sewed her dresses, taught her to cook and created a home. Soon younger sister Myra was born and the Burke family was complete.

A shy, fair haired girl who loved to read and was a bit of a homebody Rita was in the very first Beta Club in 1950 and the Tri-Hi-Y club in 1952 then topped it all off being honored with the "Best All-around Girl" award by the Worth County High School faculty in 1954. She later attended Peavy Business School then worked in Dr. Norman Crowe's office and at Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital. In her senior year Rita was chosen to go to Atlanta as a Page in the Georgia Legislature and there met a charming young attorney and legislator. She must've made an impression since once back home young

David Jones asked her out and a match was made. Two soulmates had found each other. She brought out the best in him and he widened her world into a lifetime of hard work and adventures galore. They were inseparable.

Together they were a dynamic team who understood the way to get ahead was through hard work and frugality. Early on David told Rita he would happily buy her an engagement ring OR she could have appliances for the kitchen in their little duplex. Rita chose the appliances :-). Together they ran a Law Practice, an Insurance Agency and a Real Estate office. They bought and sold land, timber, rental properties, farms, two successful grocery stores, a dry cleaners, an apartment complex and a gas station and gift shop on I-75 called Lee's plantation. They later developed Pineknoll Subdivision and donated adjacent land that would prove pivotal in creating both the Pineknoll Golf Course and Sylvester Airport. Every penny they could spare they invested aggressively into the burgeoning stock market of the 50's and 60's often described as the "Golden Age of Wall Street". They bought into the top companies of their time and rode a post war market expansion that funded evermore ambitious plans. All this is just business talk but the point is they did it TOGETHER.

Much of this was not glamorous work but she didn't shy away from any of it because the quiet homebody didn't mind getting her hands dirty. She stepped up! Rita stocked the shelves of Food Center, Inc. and Royal's Food Mart faster than the stock boys did then cut up chicken and beef in the butcher shop alongside the butcher. She worked the cash registers, collected apartment rents, read water meters, renovated flip houses and planted acres of landscaping all the while filling thousands of pages with meticulous pen and ink notations in stacks of ledgers filling shelf after shelf in the Jones Law Office.

David "Little David "Jones, Jr. came along early on Christmas Day in 1956. Rita helped her son through every trial of life. She read to him from infancy, encouraged him endlessly as a student and in his college years at UGA got on a Greyhound bus to Athens to offer the comfort only a Mother could when the pressures of pursuing a demanding Pre-Med curriculum on top of a Banking and Finance degree grew too great to shoulder alone. Her life became even richer when her son married Lane Seabolt Jones. Rita gained the daughter she had never had and a best friend in Lane's Mom Willie. Rita and Little David (and Grandma Jones as well for that matter :-)) thought the sun rose and set on Lane and they were right!

It wasn't all hard work of course. In her full life Rita managed to snorkel for lobster in the Bahamas, land game fish in the Keys, paddle kayaks, ride jet skis, pedal her three wheel bike, stroll the streets of London and Paris, float rapids on a raft in Jamaica, ride mules to a mountain top fortress in Haiti, fly helicopters into the Grand Canyon, take off in float planes from the waters of Puget Sound and go boating on the "Miss Rita" from Islamorada to Panacea!

In the years Little David and Lane were building their Cancer Centers in Texas God still had his eye on David and Rita Jones. They were never really "empty-nesters". Family friend Ray Griffin and Rita's nephew Darren James became a big part of both of their lives. Each stepped in as new sons for Rita while her own child was far from home. No two men could've done more. On Ray's untimely passing Darren's devotion remained steadfast. He became the little brother David Jr never had and day after day quietly helped Rita, David and Lane alike on Rita's last journey.

After Big David's death in 2010 Rita moved into town and bought her beloved Westberry Street home. She made it her own with its sky blue "haint paint" porch, nicely landscaped grounds and cheerful yellow door. "Come visit with me on my porch!" was her trademark invitation and if you took her up on it you

somehow left happier and more hopeful than when you arrived.

From her new headquarters (often accompanied by Lane's sweet Aunt Mae) she traveled the world with little David and Lane, supported her favorite cause the Margaret M. Jones Library and offered a helping hand to more friends and family than we will ever know.

In these years she proved to be an astute business woman as well methodically selling assets when the prices were right, flipping homes when the real estate market peaked and continuing a knack for successful investing. She may have let Big David do most of the talking but that didn't mean she hadn't been paying attention!

In recent years her good works caught up with her as she was invited to be the Grand Marshal of the Sylvester Christmas Parade in December 2023 and was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Sylvester-Worth County Chamber Of Commerce in February 2024. In true Rita fashion she was completely surprised by each honor but bursting with pride at the unexpected recognition.

What a glorious life she led.

What a fine example she set.

This amazing woman will be sorely missed and perhaps most of all we will miss that radiant "Rita smile" :-)!

Oh,that Rita smile :-)!

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC **13.** 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Banks Funeral Home  
PO Box 550  
210 N. Main Street  
Sylvester, GA 31791  
(229) 776-2055  
banksfh@yahoo.com  
<http://banks.funeralplan2.com/>

## Funeral Service

DEC **14.** 11:00 AM (ET)

Pinson Memorial Methodist Church  
109 East Pope Street  
Sylvester, GA 31791

# Tribute Wall

AA

“*Mrs. Jones was an undisputedly brilliant lady, and the mark she left upon myself and my team will endure for many years to come. I pray for her peace, and healing for her family in their time of loss. May her life inspire us all to think, be, and do more. I am beyond grateful to have been given the privilege of working with this truly great lady.*

Arif Ali - December 12, 2024 at 03:26 PM

BB

“*I just met Rita this August on Castle Island in Maine. She came to our table in the lodge and introduced herself. I loved her instantly. I had a new friend. I got her contact information before our week ended so I could keep in touch. I had no idea she was going home to battle serious health issues. She was enjoying herself, not anticipating trouble. I wish I had met her sooner, but she is forever linked with Castle Island in my mind, and I think of her every time I go through which is often. Blessed to have met her.*

Brenda Berger - December 12, 2024 at 06:35 AM

LJ

“*Lisa & Larry Jones lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



Lisa & Larry Jones - December 10, 2024 at 05:36 PM

DE

“ *Debra Eason lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



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**Debra Eason** - December 10, 2024 at 01:18 PM

DE

“ *I am so thankful for the time I had with Rita. She was such a sweet & thoughtful lady. A true Southern Belle! She never met a stranger & was so friendly & kind to all. I will miss her so very much! May she rest in peace and I pray for strength & peace for David & Lane.*

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**Debra Eason** - December 10, 2024 at 01:18 PM

MD

“ *Rita Jones was a truly remarkable woman, her beautiful smile and gracious spirit lighting up every room she entered. She had a rare kindness and hospitality that made everyone feel welcome and valued. Rita always had time for a thoughtful conversation, showing genuine interest in what I was doing and leaving me feeling uplifted. Her warmth and charm were unmatched, and I will deeply miss her presence in my life. Rest in peace, dear Rita—you will forever hold a special place in my heart. ~Michelle Douthit*

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**Michelle Douthit** - December 08, 2024 at 12:11 PM

EB

“ *Wishing you peace and comfort in this difficult time.*

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**Ed and Diane Boyd** - December 07, 2024 at 07:54 PM

TS

“ Tammy Stinson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Tammy Stinson - December 07, 2024 at 10:18 AM

PD

“ I have been truly blessed to be able to care for sweet Rita. In the short time of being her caregiver, I loved her so much. Funny things he said to me and Magen one day, we were watching her eat breakfast and she looked at us and said “ you girls get you a hotdog and go play” I guess she thought we were children. Haha. Rita you will be missed. David and Lane you all are in our prayers.



Pamela Danford - December 06, 2024 at 09:13 PM

JC

“ David, I am so sorry to hear about your Mom. She was truly a wonderful person and she will be sorely missed. You and your family are in my prayers.

Jack Colby - December 06, 2024 at 04:39 PM



“ Sandra Dilley lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Sandra Dilley - December 06, 2024 at 02:28 PM

KG

“ *Kathy C Griffin lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



Kathy C Griffin - December 06, 2024 at 12:37 PM

LP

“ *Lamar Potts lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



Lamar Potts - December 05, 2024 at 11:55 PM

DB

“ *Ms. Rita will always be remembered as having a kind soul. Always had a smile & kind words when she saw you. Loved how she remembered so much history in our town & loved sharing so many stories.*

*Debbie and Ray Banks*

Debbie Ray Banks - December 05, 2024 at 06:35 PM

LP

“ *A very nice lady. God bless.*



Lamar Potts - December 05, 2024 at 04:55 PM

EC

“ *Such a kind, thoughtful lady, Mrs. Rita touched many lives. I enjoyed her and will miss her. Prayers for her friends and family.*



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**Elizabeth and Charlie Cowles** - December 05, 2024 at 11:29 AM

BG

“ *I am sorry to hear about this. I will always remember when Mr. David and Mrs. Rita took me and my friend Karen to Atlanta to serve as Pages. We stayed at the Henry Grady hotel and had so much fun. David was a tiny boy and may not remember that particular trip but it's one I remember well.*

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**Bobbie Gay** - December 05, 2024 at 07:35 AM

DK

“ *Rita Jones will be missed by many! Knowing her since we were children, Davis and I know what a lovely lady she was ! She contributed so much to our community! Her kind manner was shown to all who knew her ! We extend our thoughts and prayers to David and all her friends and family during this sad time ! Truly, a life well lived will bring comfort to her family. May God's love bring comfort to each of you ! Sincerely , Davis and Donna King*

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**Donna King** - December 05, 2024 at 07:30 AM

SR

“ My thoughts and prayers for the family. Mrs. Rita was very loved by the children of Worth County. I remember the smiles when we would go to read to the day care children and the pre-K kids. Mrs. Rita made the best Mrs. Santa Claus. Her smile was contagious, and the children could all feel the love she felt for them. She never left a story-time before she was hugged by them all. I will always cherish the memories with her and the wisdom she shared. Rest in peace, Mrs. Rita. You will be missed by all.

Sharon E Rhoads - December 04, 2024 at 08:54 PM

K(

“ In the short time I cared for Ms Rita, I learned to love her, such a dear sweet little lady, always thinking of others first. I am going to miss her sweet smile and funny sense of humor. Im praying for you and Lane, David



Karen Stokes, (Rambo) - December 04, 2024 at 08:37 PM

KF

“ Kelley And Bobby Fowler lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Kelley and Bobby Fowler - December 04, 2024 at 08:24 PM

MH

“ Mack And Mary Houston lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Mack and Mary Houston - December 04, 2024 at 06:14 PM

DB

“ Debbie Ray Banks lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Debbie Ray Banks - December 04, 2024 at 05:09 PM

MW

“ Such a sweet lady. I am so happy that I met her. ❤️



magen Wilson - December 04, 2024 at 04:30 PM

JS

“ Judy&Mack Sutton lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Judy&Mack Sutton - December 04, 2024 at 04:25 PM

KM

“ *Karen McDonald lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



**Karen McDonald** - December 04, 2024 at 02:35 PM

EH

“ *ERIC LEE HALL lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



**ERIC LEE HALL** - December 04, 2024 at 01:09 PM

SB

“ *Savanna Barnes lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



**savanna barnes** - December 04, 2024 at 12:36 PM

GS

“ *Gail Snipes lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



**Gail Snipes** - December 04, 2024 at 11:39 AM

MK

*Little David and Lane, words just don't seem enough when someone as Wonderful and Loved, as Miss Rita was, journeys Home. I will always remember your Mama the first time I met her in person: we had been invited out to your home for dinner. The most Delicious, Beautiful meal, Beautiful Home and the most Beautiful, Sweet, Blonde Lady I had ever seen. I was enamored with your Mama as she made me and all of us feel like we were at home....I was a very shy youngster and I loved Miss Rita instantly as she made me feel like I was very special. When one is one of 6 children, ....it just goes to show, Little David, that your Mama was, indeed, an angel on earth. I have never forgotten how such a Beautiful, Earth Angel made this skinny, frizzy-haired youngster feel so loved...by Someone I had just met in person. Thank you, Little David, and Lane for sharing Miss Rita with everyone. I miss her greatly. Love and prayers to you and Lane for comfort and strength in the coming days and months ahead. I love y'all very much. Love, Melanie*

Melanie Golden Kirkbride - December 15, 2024 at 02:21 PM

CW

“ David and Lane, I'm so sorry to hear about Ms Rita. Praying for peace for you and your family.

Cynthia Wilbanks - December 04, 2024 at 10:29 AM

CW

*My heart is broken. 💔 I didn't get to see Ms. Rita very often but I sure am going to miss this sweet lady. Mr. David & Ms. Lane, I hope you know how much I love Ms. Rita. I am praying for you and your family.*

Connie Watson - December 04, 2024 at 01:14 PM

ND

“ Nancy Dawson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones



Nancy Dawson - December 04, 2024 at 09:47 AM



“ *Brenda Hicks lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Rita Jones*



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**Brenda Hicks** - December 04, 2024 at 09:07 AM



*Rita was one of my close friends. We had many good times together. I will miss her and remember her kind words and the smile she had. rest in peace my dear friend.*

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**Marie Hudson** - December 05, 2024 at 12:49 PM