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Wilhelmina "Billie" Burke Miller

In August 1943, a train trip from Cincinnati to Atlanta had a significant impact on the life of Billie Burke when she met a young submariner, LTJG John B. Miller. They would rarely be apart for nearly 66 years until the Lord called her home on Sunday May 3, 2009.

Born December 13, 1920 in Hartley, KY, the eldest child of schoolteachers, Richard and Allie (Little) Burke she was named for the Queen of the Netherlands, but nicknamed Billie by her grandfather. In 1934-35 she attended the Annville Institute of Dutch Reformed Church on a 4-H Scholarship and later graduated as Valedictorian of Virgie (KY) class of 1938. At Pikeville (KY) College she was voted the Most Beautiful Coed. She taught elementary in a two room schoolhouse until 1943 when she moved to Detroit, MI and contributed to the war effort as a "Rosie the Riveter" in a bomber factory and later with the Naval Procurement Office. After a whirlwind courtship, she married John on January 29, 1944 in Portsmouth, NH. While he was on war duty in the Pacific, she received her B.S. from Eastern Kentucky University. After the war she taught in Iowa City, IA while John finished law school. They then moved to Ames, IA and eventually Nevada, IA which was home for the next 56 years. In her early years she taught 1st grade but mostly devoted herself to raising her own family and imparting her love of education to them.

Billie was a member of Central Presbyterian Church in Nevada, IA and First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, NC. She also held memberships in Questers, P.E.O. Sisterhood, Kensington, and the Indian Creek Country Club. She volunteered for the American Red Cross, Cub Scouts, Candy Strippers, audio taping many books for the blind, and was a tour guide at the Iowa Governor's Mansion, Terrace Hill. She loved her family and friends, her flowers, reading, cooking and playing bridge.

She is survived by John, her husband of 65 years; a son, Rick (Dotti) Miller of Sewickley, PA; a daughter, Anne (Joe) Yannessia of Jacksonville, NC; two grandsons, Joseph and John Yannessia of Jacksonville; three brothers, Ray (Betty) Burke of Ft. Myers, FL; Walter (Gloria) Burke of Deltona, FL; Richard (Jo) Burke of Pikeville, KY; and a sister, Anne (Lum) Massengale of Corryton, TN. She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers.

A memorial service was planned for Wednesday May 20 at the First Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, NC. No flowers please but donations may be made to the American Cancer Society (1-800-227-2345) or First Presbyterian Church, 400 Bayshore, Jacksonville, NC 28540. Electronic condolences may be sent to jonesfh.org.