



Ms. Barbara Ann Kent

November 14, 2012

Kent, Barbara Ann, 81, of Plant City entered into eternal rest on November 14, 2012 from cancer

Of her many achievements in life, Kent was often acknowledged for raising eight sons as a single parent. Her great success as a mother is regarded with admiration in light of her many other accomplishments in both her professional and community pursuits. Kent is survived by her 8 sons David Kent of Sioux Falls, S.D., Stephen Kent of Lakeland, FL., Timothy Kent of Bartow, FL., Patrick Kent of Frostproff, FL., Christopher Kent of Glenmore, PA., Matthew Kent of Titusville, FL. Mark Kent of Atlanta, GA., and William Kent of Plant City, FL. She is also survived by 4 daughters-in-law, 1 son-in-law, 20 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. Kent was born on June 31, 1931 in Bartow, Florida as the only child to Mary and Carl Bailey. Due to her father earning jobs as a dragline and crane operator in the heavy construction industry, the family moved often when she was young. She went to five different schools in four different states. The first year she spent the whole year in one school was when she was in the fourth grade in Holiday Cove, West Virginia. In 1942 the family moved to Ceiba, Puerto Rico where her father was involved in the building of the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station. The family returned to Plant City in 1944 and her father enlisted in the Navy to do his part in World War II. Before he left for service they built a small frame house for Barbara and her mother to live in while her father was away. He returned from service in 1945 and they added onto the house and established

themselves firmly in Plant City. Kent finished elementary school at Woodrow Wilson Elementary School in Plant City and continued her education at Mary J. Tomlin Junior High school which was still at its original location on Baker Street. After junior high school, she attended Plant City High School in the 1914 building where she was an honor graduate in 1949. During her high school years she was an officer in the band, a member of the glee club, a member of the National Honor Society, and a member of Future Homemakers of America (FHA). A very good student with a love of writing and words, Kent was also a passionate reader and throughout her life encouraged others to read. She would often refer to books she's read as "old friends" and throughout her lifetime would surround herself with shelves upon shelves of books. Inspired by her love of words and stories, Kent decided upon graduation from high school that she would study journalism at the University of Florida where she was enrolled from 1949 to 1953. Journalism proved to be the perfect career path for Kent, and it was also a very strong choice for a young woman to make during this time in history. This type of courage and strong personal drive were characteristics that would become defining factors for her in Kent's life. As a journalist, she worked at the Gainesville Sun, Homestead News, Homestead News Leader, The Indian Town Press, the Miami Review, and the Plant City Courier. Kent rose to the position of editor in both the Indian Town Press and the Plant City Courier. During her first year as editor of The Courier, the publication was recognized by the Florida Press Association as the best weekly newspaper in the state. This would be the first of numerous awards the hometown paper would receive during her tenure as editor. Her editorial column "Barbara Cue" gave her the opportunity to share her keen and often humorous observations of life with literally tens of thousands of readers. When Kent retired in 1996, the mayor of Plant City declared it "Barbara Kent Day" and presented her with a key to the city. In subsequent years, Kent continued to be a contributing writer for the Plant City Chamber of Commerce, The Lakeland Ledger, and the Neighbors column for The Tampa Tribune. In addition to her active professional life, Kent was

civically involved in the community. She was a member of the Plant City Business and Professional Women's Club, the Plant City Chapter of Pilot International, and the Raiders Booster Club. The Plant City Business and Professional Women's Club recognized her with the 1990 Woman of Achievement award. Kent also had a great love of community theatre. She became involved in the mid 70's when she determined that The Harlequin Players in Homestead, Florida would provide a no-cost productive outlet for herself and the five sons living at home during that time. She eventually served a year as the president of the board of directors for The Harlequin Players, and when she returned to Plant City in 1978 she was one of the founding member of the Plant City Community Theatre, which is now known as Plant City Entertainment. Over the years, Barbara stayed very involved in the theatre, even after all of her sons grew up. She served on the board of the Plant City Community Theatre for numerous years and has served as its president. Barbara was recognized for her community theatre work, receiving the Brad Behan Award for Outstanding Service and becoming the first inductee into the Plant City Community Theatre Hall of Fame. In 2010 the Monti Community Theatre Awards in the Tampa region recognized Kent for her decades of support for community theatre by inducting her into their Hall of Fame in the Lifetime of Outstanding Achievement category. Kent was an avid football fan, a passion she was able to share with her sons. She has had an unwavering commitment to the University of Florida football team since her college years and spent most of her adult life as an ardent enthusiast of the Miami Dolphins. Even in her later years, she was often seen wearing a Miami Dolphins football jersey and could talk statistics and strategy with great fluency. It with great fondness that the family reports that during Kent's last moments of life she was covered with a Miami Dolphins blanket. A Celebration of Barbara Kent's life will be held at 7:30 PM on Saturday, December 1, 2012 at Plant City Entertainment, 101 Thomas Street, Plant City, Florida. She will be remembered through songs and readings that were

meaningful in her life. Kent's wishes were for guests to dress casually for the occasion. The official memorial program will be followed by an informal reception.

Tribute Wall



“ *Lisa Cunningham lit a candle in memory of Ms. Barbara Ann Kent*



Lisa Cunningham - September 14, 2021 at 06:23 PM



“ I worked with Barbara at The Courier in Plant City; she was like a second mother to me. She had no daughters and I recall her saying that she wished she had given her sons a better role model for a good marriage.

I used to tell her she should write a book about raising eight boys all by herself. She was so amazing. She taught me how to be a better journalist and a better woman.

When I got oral cancer at age 26, she contacted my husband, whom I had separated from. She didn't want me to be alone at such a time. Even though I had zero interest in reuniting with him, I didn't fault Barbara for thinking of me and wanting to help in my time of need. Lucky for me, I had a large, supportive family who saw me through that trying time of surgery and radiation.

I think of her often and wish I'd been at her funeral. But at the time, I was dealing with another health crisis. I had a brainstem stroke in November 2011 and my father passed away from colon cancer just two days before Christmas. I had to apply for disability and it took over two years to get it. I ended up living in homeless shelters for three years because my mother and siblings couldn't handle having two major crises at once.

Anyway, my thoughts and prayers are with her sons and I want to let you know that she changed my life and was one of the best people I ever worked with. I'll never forget Barbara Kent.

One more thing: she was a dedicated Catholic and I'm sure she'd be pleased that I returned to my cradle church in 2013 when I even lost my car. A woman from the Catholic Church in Dunedin was the only one to return my calls when I reached out for help.

Lisa Cunningham - September 14, 2021 at 06:21 PM

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“ *The team at Walton Communities in Atlanta, along with our single parent residents who heard Mrs. Kent's inspiring story from her son, Mark, last year, send our thoughts and prayers to the family. What a remarkable woman!*

Pat Newman, Walton Communities

Pat Newman - November 20, 2012 at 12:48 PM

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“ *My thoughts and prayers go out to you all. Paula Park, Merritt Island, FL.*

Paula Park - November 18, 2012 at 01:02 PM