

## **Charlene Ruth Mullen McClintock Surwill**



**Charlene Ruth McClintock Surwill, 78, of Billings, passed away Dec. 4, 2013.**

**Charlene was born on Jan. 24, 1935, in Pueblo, Colo., to William O. and Etta May Mullen. She and her younger brother, William Jr., whom she adored, grew up on a farm on the “Pueblo Mesa.” She attended Lakeside Vineland High School and graduated in 1953. She went on to attend Colorado State University in Fort Collins.**

**After attending college, Charlene took to the sky during the “golden age of flying” in the 1950s — when flying was glamorous — as a stewardess for the then start-up Frontier Airlines. While flying for Frontier, she and fellow stewardess Hellen Miller had an apartment in Billings, and one of their neighbors was Myron “Mike” McClintock. Mike loved to hunt and was a former military officer who owned an insurance and real estate business in Billings. He was a confirmed bachelor ... until he met Charlene.**

**Charlene and Mike fell in love and were married on Nov. 11, 1959, in a small ceremony with close friends and family at First United Methodist Church in downtown Billings. By 1966, Mike had been elected as a Yellowstone County Commissioner, and Charlene essentially took over day-to-day operations of the insurance business. As an entrepreneur, she added a Xerox copy service to the business that offered the first copier in Billings. She successfully ran the “Xero Copy Center” for the next 25 years (named “Xero,” not “Xerox,” after a nasty letter from the copy manufacturer ... something about trademark infringement).**

**In the midst of all this, Charlene and Mike had son Michael David. Charlene did not know it, but she was destined to be a soccer mom before there was even such a thing. Armed with wood-paneled station wagons with eight track players, Charlene (and her friend Sylvia McCalla) spent countless hours running their kids all over Montana and surrounding states for tennis tournaments. Michael David remained her pride and joy, and she loved visiting her sportster-grandchildren in Oklahoma.**

**Charlene always timed her visits to see their baseball, basketball and football games. Grandchildren Matthew and Mason will miss their “NeNe.”**

**In 1988, Charlene lost her husband Mike after a long illness. But God was watching out for Charlene, and she would soon meet the handsome and charming Dr. Ben Surwill, Dean of the College of Education at Eastern Montana College. Ben became the second great love of her life. They were married in 1990 and carried on like newlyweds from then on — throwing parties for friends, traveling across the globe, and enjoying life to the fullest. Ben’s adult children, Tom, Ben, Rob and Tricia, were a welcome part of Charlene’s life. Leaving Charlene much too soon, second husband Ben passed away in 1996.**

**Charlene, however, was nothing if not “one tough lady” — think Margret Thatcher tough. While she deeply missed the loves of her life, she was always surrounded by other family and close friends too numerous to mention (but who know who they are). She continued to travel and enjoy life, was active in ZONTA and PEO, and dearly loved her friends from these activities. She was active in and attended First Presbyterian Church, loved “Pastor Dave,” and had many church friends. In the years after Ben’s passing, she became particularly close to Ben Jr. and his wife Gail, who helped fill the distance to son Michael David in Oklahoma. Gail was the daughter Charlene never had.**

**As one tough lady, no one close to Charlene was surprised that she won her recent fight with cancer. Any observer of the fight would agree, Charlene practically willed the cancer into remission. After beating cancer, it was thought Charlene may live to be 100. But as she might say, as a good Presbyterian: “This is too soon for all of you, but God has other plans for me. His ways are not your ways, and his timing is not your timing.” While this is true, Charlene will still be dearly missed by her family and friends.**

**Charlene is survived by her son, Michael D. McClintock, daughter-in-law Niki, and grandchildren Mason and Matthew, all of Oklahoma City; her brother, William O. Mullen and sister-in-law Darlene of Pueblo, and their children Billy Lee, Sheri, Tommy and Cori; cousin Mike Gray and his wife Alice of Silverdale, Wash., and their children Rod and Rick; cousin Janette and Ben Forsyth of Great Falls, and their children Brad and Melissa; and stepchildren Tom, Ben, Rob and Tricia Surwill, and step-grandchildren Tom, Emily, Maggie, Kathryn, Kyle, Kortney, Megan, Paul, Matt, Samantha and Nicole.**

**Memorials can be sent to PEO Chapter S, 2751 Gregory Drive, Billings, MT 59102 or to the First Presbyterian Church.**

**The family will be receiving friends for visitation on Sunday from 2-4 p.m., at Michelotti-Sawyers Mortuary, 1001 Alderson Ave. Funeral Services will be held at 2:00 p.m., Monday, December 9, 2013, at First Presbyterian Church. The casket will be closed at church. Private burial will be held on Tuesday at Mountview Cemetery.**