



## Elizabeth "Betty" Michell

November 14, 1930 - March 19, 2023

Elizabeth "Betty" Michell of Gladwyne Pa, formerly of Hilton Head Island, SC died peacefully at Waverly Heights after a short illness on Sunday, March 19, 2023. She was 92.

Born in Ardmore PA on November 14, 1930, Betty was the daughter of Evelyn and Harold Baxter. Betty attended Mount Vernon Seminary and College in Washington DC and started her career at the CIA. Shortly thereafter she returned to Philadelphia and married Samuel "Bow" Wheeler and became mother to 3 boys and threw herself into her young childrens' activities. By the mid 1960's Betty began to take an active interest in horticulture that grew to be a lifelong passion. Her horticultural journey started in 1964 when she went to work for Mrs. Laura L. Barnes who was the Director of the Barnes Foundation Arboretum and Head of School in Merion PA. Upon Mrs. Barnes' death in 1966, Betty became the assistant to Mrs. Barnes' replacement, Dr. John M Fogg, renowned Professor of Botany at the University of Pennsylvania. In addition to her duties at the school, Betty became proficient in her plant knowledge and provided many detailed and interesting tours of the Arboretum to visitors and guests pointing out many of the specimen plants.

It was once again thanks to horticulture that Betty began the next and best phase of her life when she met Henry "Hank" Michell, a horticultural products executive, and married him in 1977. Betty, as step Mom to Hank's two

children, enthusiastically embraced her maternal role and was a wonderful and nurturing caretaker. It was in those early days that Hank and Betty were renowned for their great parties, many that would flow out into their beautiful gardens at their home in Rosemont PA. It was during this time that Betty went back to school and officially obtained her graduate certificate at the famed Barnes Foundation Arboretum School where she had formerly worked. She also volunteered every year at the Philadelphia Flower Show and was one of the volunteer experts in plant nomenclature. In addition to the Flower Show, Betty pioneered and started the Philadelphia City Gardens Contest which was a well regarded program that showcased the beautiful work of inner city communities to proudly show off their gardens in friendly competition. The Contest continued for many years under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. When she wasn't tending to her plants or throwing parties, Betty was perfecting her backhand on the tennis courts at the Merion Cricket Club.

Finally, Hank and Betty bought a home on Hilton Head Island to live out their final chapter which they did with great gusto taking up golf with fervent passion. Their house was full most of the time of friends from Philadelphia who would stop off on their way to Florida. As grandparents, Hank and Betty frequently played host to their grandchildren who appreciated all of the extracurriculars to include golf, water skiing, fishing, swimming and just hanging out.

Betty had a zest for life, enjoyed people, a sharp wit, loved dogs and loved her family.

She is survived by her sons, Samuel (Ellen) and William (Patricia) Wheeler; step son Henry (Trish) F. Mitchell 4th; 7 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Henry F. Mitchell 3rd; son, Harold

B. Wheeler; brother, Donald K. Baxter; step daughter Rebecca Michell.

Services and interment will be private.

# Tribute Wall

ST

“ Dear Sam and Bill,

*I am so sorry that you have lost your mother. Reading this tribute to her, it is obvious that she had a long and fulfilling life, filled with the joys of children, grandchildren and with great and varied interests.*

*My name will likely not be recognizable to Sam for I am an old friend of Hal's and Bill's from Washington, DC. I have been searching for Bill for about 10 years, since I learned that Hal had died. I had lost touch and had no way to get in touch with anyone in the family. I was heartbroken at the news of his death and was not able to share it with any of you. I also had lost touch with our old crowd at Columbia Station. I don't know what prompted me to again Google Bill's name last night, but this time, when I did, your mother's obituary was revealed.*

*I met your mother once, briefly, circa 1979 or so when she came to DC.*

*I have written a card to Bill that I am sending care of the funeral home (their suggestion). Since I have been looking for Bill for so long, I would be delighted to hear from him as soon as he is able.*

*Please accept our sincere condolences and sympathy at the loss of your mother. I know you hold her close to your heart.*

*With affection, Susan Robson Tobin and Bruce Tobin*

---

**Susan Robson Tobin** - March 28, 2023 at 10:16 PM