



Grace Florence DeMartino McEvoy

June 17, 1927 - October 16, 2013

The final curtain closed on the extraordinary life of Grace Florence DeMartino McEvoy on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2013.

The eldest and last surviving of five children (Rose Marie, Florence, Janet-Lee and Ralph Jr.), she was born to the late Ralph and Lena DeMartino, founders of Ralph's Farms and Nurseries in Long Island, N.Y.

She graduated at age 16 from Hempstead High School, and immediately assumed a maternal role for her younger siblings following the premature death of her mother.

She was soon employed as a photographic and department store fashion model in the New York area.

At the outbreak of World War II, she directed her musical abilities toward entertaining the troops at Mitchell Field and later performed in area jazz clubs.

In 1947, she married her handsome sailor, the late George Raymond McEvoy, raised two daughters and influenced the lives of three grandchildren. During her 44-year marriage, she pursued a real estate career in the Massapequa, N.Y., area.

After the passing of her husband, she relocated to Goldsboro, N.C., in 1993.

Though New York born and bred, Gracie quickly embraced Southern life, and endeared herself to many new friends as the curtain rose on Act II. Her zest for life and love of the arts attracted her to a variety of creative endeavors from Mrs. Claus to sultry lounge singer.

She welcomed opportunities at the Wayne County Arts Council, Goldsboro School of Ballet, Artistic Dance Academy and Goldsboro Parks and Recreation, among others, and served on the boards of both dance companies.

She directed the Goldsboro Silver Tappers for 14 years, coaching them through state level competition.

Adding to her accomplishments, she was a two-time Wayne County Senior Games "Best in Show" winner, and was honored to compete in solo vocal competition in the North Carolina State Senior Games.

Gracie pursued her vocal talents, sharing her love for music of the 1940s and Broadway show tunes by performing at local venues including Billie's Backstreet, Nino's and Cheryl's Place.

Expanding her horizons, she performed as a member of the Johnston County Chorale, with featured solos and comedic cameos.

Even in her final year of life, she continued to entertain staff and other residents at the Brian Center.

Act III will undoubtedly bring encore performances and her spirit will continue in the lives she touched. Bravo, Miss Gracie!

Gracie will be remembered by her daughters, Marie Barnes and husband, Jonathan, of Goldsboro, N.C., and Karen Ward and husband, Bobby, of Massapequa, N.Y.; grandchildren, Brian Ward and wife, Tina, of Sea Cliff, N.Y., Kelly Ward of Long Beach, N.Y., and Ashley Barnes of Wilmington, N.C.; a great-granddaughter, Antonia Ward; a brother-in-law, Jim McKenna, of Lake Havasu, Ariz.; nieces and nephews including Lori Huether and husband, Jim, of St. James, N.Y., Janet-Lee Hlish and Judy Hlish of San Diego, Calif., Frank Scura and wife, Carol, of Deer Park, N.Y., Lloyd Jose and wife, Toby, of Stonybrook, N.Y., and daughters, Jessica and Chelsea, and Ralph, Daniel, Albert and Frank DeMartino and families of New York; cousins, James DeMartini and wife, Vergie, of Valley Stream, N.Y., Gloria Benetti and husband, Louis, and family of Palm Beach, Fla.; and special friends, Tom Casey and Gloria Wrenn.

The family expresses gratitude to the caring staff of Brian Center, Wayne Memorial Hospital and Kitty Askins Hospice Center.

A memorial celebration of Gracie's life will be held in Goldsboro, N.C., with burial in Massapequa, N.Y., dates to be announced.

Memorial donations may be made to the Grace McEvoy Dance Scholarship at www.the.danceelement.com.