



Mrs. Margaret Lightsey MacMillan Payne

July 13, 1934 - February 17, 2026

A Life of Faith, Family, and Service

Margaret Lightsey MacMillan Payne, affectionately known as “GaGa,” was born on July 13, 1934, in Varnville, South Carolina. She was the daughter of William Norris Lightsey and Nell Peoples Lightsey and the sister of the late Nell Lightsey Laffitte (Tucker). She spent her childhood in Varnville, where she formed the deep roots of faith, friendship, and family that would shape her life. As a young woman, she was honored as Miss Varnville at the Hampton County Watermelon Festival — an early reflection of her charm and vibrant spirit.

After graduating from Varnville High School, Margaret attended Duke University School of Nursing, where she studied for three years. During her time at Duke, she was an active campus leader, serving as President of the Duke Young Christian Women, singing soprano in the prestigious Triple Trio, and forming friendships through her membership in Delta Delta Delta sorority. Her love for Duke would continue long after her time as a student, and she never missed an opportunity to cheer on the Blue Devils during basketball season or to encourage the education of the next generation through the Margaret LM Payne Nursing Scholarship.

In 1955, Margaret married Richard Hunt (“Dick”) MacMillan Jr. and began her

life as an Army wife. Their service took them to Texas (where their son, Hunt, was born), Germany (where their daughter, Melanie, was born), Alabama, Georgia, and finally, back to Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. In 1964, the family settled in Hampton, South Carolina. There, Margaret devoted herself to her home and to her community, often sharing her beautiful voice at weddings and funerals. She also became more involved in her family's railroad and timber business.

In 1990, Margaret married the love of her life, Charles Ronald "Ronnie" Payne, and moved to Bishopville, South Carolina. Their life together was filled with shared joys: singing in the church choir, participating in sports and civic groups, biking, Sunday school, and gathering with friends. Margaret cherished her regular bridge games and her get-togethers with her beloved "Lunch Bunch."

Margaret's faith was the cornerstone of her life. She was an engaged member of Bishopville Baptist Church and was actively involved with Charleston Southern University, where she served on the Board of Visitors.

Margaret and Ronnie also shared a love of travel and adventure, exploring Russia, Australia, New Zealand, and Alaska, and logging countless miles across much of the United States in her cherry red Suburban (named "Big Red"). She was always ready for the next visit, the next gathering, or the next adventure, particularly when it was in support of a family member.

At the same time, she found equal joy in more simple pleasures, enjoying the morning sunrise with a cup of coffee - always taken black - on a porch overlooking the ocean at Hilton Head or in the sunroom of her family's property, Laurel Spring, where she could see the ducks coming in on the Combahee River. On rainy days, she was easily enticed into a game of Contract, Gin Rummy, or "Knuckle Breaking Sol," particularly if one of her grandchildren was at the table.

Beyond besting them at cards, Margaret was an attentive and active grandparent to each of her grandchildren. In their younger years, it was not uncommon for her to have them dancing around the great room at Laurel Spring to her lively rendition of the “Boogie Woogie” on the piano, or, to their delight, mixing up her famed “Elephant Drink” with a questionable concoction of every soda available. She was present for each and every graduation, sporting event, and school performance she could attend, and she marked every birthday, graduation, anniversary, and milestone with a thoughtful card and phone call. Most importantly, she ended each phone call and visit with a big hug, saying, “I love you more than you know.”

Margaret was known for her quick wit and unforgettable one-liners. Whether declaring, “I need it like I need a hole in my head,” or joking, “I can keep a secret — it’s the people I tell that can’t,” she brought laughter wherever she went. She also had a treasure trove of stories and adventures from her childhood that she loved to recount, including the time she went out duck hunting, only to come back with a deer instead.

After Ronnie’s death in 2006, Margaret moved to Still Hopes Episcopal Retirement Community in West Columbia, where she fully embraced her new community, hosting bridge games with old and new friends, attending lectures, planning activities, going on field trips, supporting campus improvements, and building meaningful friendships with her fellow residents. An avid gardener, Margaret was quick to share with new Still Hopes residents the clippings from her plants. She was also a devoted supporter of The Guignard Society at Still Hopes.

Margaret was a loving mother to her children: Hunt MacMillan (Peggy), Charlottesville, Virginia; Melanie Glenn (Lyles), Columbia, South Carolina; Mark Payne (Connie), Easley, South Carolina; Scott Payne (Kathleen),

Greenville, South Carolina; and Jeff Payne (Lori), Florence, South Carolina.

Margaret was also deeply beloved by her grandchildren and her legacy continues through each of them: Caroline Jeschke (Eric), Arlington, Virginia; Richard MacMillan, Waynesboro, Virginia; Stirling MacMillan (Cassie), Bybee, Virginia; Frances Farmer (Joe), Richmond, Virginia; Hunter Glenn (Daniel Eggleston), Charlottesville, Virginia; Jenna Semsar (Joe), Greenville, South Carolina; Andrew Payne, Newport, Kentucky; Maggie Payne, Charlotte, North Carolina; Will Payne (Sarah Katherine), Florence, South Carolina; Anne Walker Elmore (Jackson), Florence, South Carolina; Christopher Payne, Charletson, South Carolina; and, Anna Kathleen Payne, Madrid, Spain.

She was equally devoted to her great-grandchildren: Wilkins Harvin, Evie Jeschke, Ethan Jeschke, Lightsey Farmer, Ford Farmer, Garrott Eggleston, Mae MacMillan, Charlotte Semsar, Margaret Semsar, and Penelope Semsar.

Throughout her lifetime, she was surrounded by the love and support of her family and friends while sharing her core values of faith, love, and community. Her warmth, humor, and presence will be missed by her family, her friends, and all who were fortunate enough to know her.

Her family is deeply grateful for the loving and faithful care provided by Chele Lanoway, the staff of Still Hopes, Solutions for Living, and Prisma Hospice.

Memorials may be made to:

Still Hopes Episcopal Retirement Community 1 Still Hopes Drive West
Columbia, SC 29169

Margaret LM Payne Nursing Scholarship DUMC 3322 307 Trent Drive
Durham, NC 27710

Charleston Southern University Development Office PO Box 118087
Charleston, SC 29423

Cemetery Details

Piedmont Cemetery

720 Sumter HW
Bishopville, SC 29010

Previous Events

Graveside

FEB 21. 2:00 PM (ET)

Piedmont Cemetery
720 Sumter HW
Bishopville, SC 29010

Tribute Wall

 Eddie
Boykin

“ Eddie Boykin lit a candle in memory of Mrs.
Margaret Lightsey MacMillan Payne



Eddie Boykin - February 23 at 09:46 PM

MB

“ Matt And Betsy Bramlett lit a candle in
memory of Mrs. Margaret Lightsey MacMillan
Payne



Matt and Betsy Bramlett - February 22 at 06:13 PM

LS

“ Lori Smith lit a candle in memory of Mrs.
Margaret Lightsey MacMillan Payne



Lori Smith - February 21 at 03:30 PM

AA

“ Prayers for the family 🙏🙏🙏



Archie and Kay Amerson - February 20 at 05:42 PM

DS

“ *Dianne And Fred Sandy lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Margaret Lightsey MacMillan Payne*



Dianne and Fred Sandy - February 20 at 03:03 PM

ST

“ *Susan O Thrasher lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Margaret Lightsey MacMillan Payne*



Susan O Thrasher - February 20 at 11:39 AM

LK

“ *Margaret was a joy to be with and a constant source of encouragement and inspiration. Our prayers go out to the family and we know that she is with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ now! May our Lord keep all of you in the palm of His hand!*

Lin Kirkman - February 20 at 11:28 AM

AM

“ *Our sympathy to her family in their loss and shared joy in the celebration of an exuberant life well lived!*
Tim and Annie McIlhenny

Annie McIlhenny - February 19 at 07:06 PM