



Mary (Vukas) Spike

August 21, 1952 - September 25, 2021

Embraced by her children and husband, Mary (Vukas) Spike, 69, peacefully passed away on September 25, 2021, at UF Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville, FL. Born in Savannah, G.A. on August 21, 1952, to her Croatian parents, Samuel and Jennie Vukas, the family moved shortly thereafter to Key West, FL. Mary grew up in Key West and was a 1971 graduate of Key West High School. After high school in the summer of '71, she was immediately employed by the Key West Naval Base, Truman Annex Supply Department as a federal civil service employee. After the closure of the naval base, she worked her way up at the Naval Air Station Key West on Boca Chica Key from a Shipment Assistant to a GS-9 Supply/Traffic Management Officer. She loved to dance and was a member of the group called, "Los Dandys de Boza" of Boza's Comparsa from 1969 through 1972. From her first marriage to, Harry D. Lariz, Jr., she bore her two reasons for living, her son, Stephen Lariz and daughter, Amanda Lariz-McDaniel. At the chiming of the bells on New Year's Day 1989, she married her second husband, Greg Spike, of Canaseraga, N.Y. They have been happily married ever since. Greg was in the navy and stationed in Key West when the couple met. After they wed, Mary and Greg moved the family from Key West to Virginia Beach, V.A. where Greg was stationed a couple of years. While living there, Mary worked at the Norfolk Naval Base. The family later returned to Florida and lived in Mayport, near Jacksonville from 1992 to 1995 where Mary worked as a legal secretary for the Jacksonville Area Legal Aid office in downtown Jax. After Greg retired, they moved the family to Newberry, FL, west of Gainesville. From 1995 to around 2010, Mary worked for the Koch Foundation as an Asst. Grants Manager, later promoted to Grants Manager. In 2019, she, her husband, and son moved to Gainesville, FL to be closer to her daughter.

She loved her family more than anything and was the best "Nana" to her three grandchildren, Olivia, Christian, and Grace Lariz-McDaniel. She always enjoyed going to their softball and soccer games. She was so proud of her children and loved to hear her daughter sing, or see her son's artistic drawings. Mary loved hanging out with her friends, talking about past times, or traveling with her husband. One of her favorite things to do was going to the Hard Rock Casino to play the slot machines. She was the type of person who was always smiling and laughing. Mary was all heart and loved everyone, but was a

strong-willed woman and would tell it like it is. She grew up tough with her two older brothers, Johnny, and Tony. No matter how little she had in life growing up she never showed bitterness because of it. Instead, she would make do with what she had. She was extremely talented and smart. If she didn't have something she needed, she would teach herself how to make it. As she became more independent, she would strive to make her life and her children's lives the best they could be. She made sure that her children had everything they needed and never went without. She would leave no stomach empty. No matter who it was her door would always be open to those who are lonely or hungry. She was a wonderful cook and could bake an amazing lasagna for any occasion. Every year, her family looked forward to her Thanksgiving stuffing and Christmas pork, stuffed with garlic cloves and marinated in mojo. Mary was a devoted mother to her children. She would go to the ends of the earth to fulfill her family's needs. She never said, "No", and would always find a way. She was full Croatian and spoke the language fluently. Mary was a devout Catholic and a parishioner of Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Gainesville, FL. There's no doubt for those who believe in afterlife that Mary is watching over her family. She will forever be deeply missed.

Mary is preceded in death by her parents, Samuel, and Jenny Vukas; her older brother, John T. Vukas; her older sister, Agnes Vukas who passed at the age of three from cancer before Mary was born; and her ex-husband, Harry D. Lariz, Jr. She is survived by her husband, Greg Spike of Gainesville, FL; her older brother, Anthony (Tony) P. Vukas of Lake Worth, FL.; her son, Stephen Lariz; her daughter, Amanda Lariz-McDaniel (Kris), and 3 grandchildren, Olivia, Christian, and Grace, all of Gainesville, FL.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, October 2, 2021, 5:30 p.m. at Williams-Thomas Westarea, 823 NW 143rd Street Newberry, FL. with Fr. Marialal Joseph officiating.

Family will receive friends at the funeral home from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Events

OCT 2 **Family Will Receive Friends** 04:30PM - 05:30PM

2

Williams - Thomas Westarea

823 N.W 143rd Street, Newberry, FL, US, 32669

OCT 2 **Funeral Service** 05:30PM

2

Williams - Thomas Westarea

823 N.W 143rd Street, Newberry, FL, US, 32669

Comments



“ Mumma,

You are on my mind every minute of every hour, every day. All these memories of us come flooding into my head. One of my favorite memories was when I was little, you took me by the hands, twirled me around in our dining area on Duck Ave. It was to the song, “ I Wanna Bop With You Baby” by Dan Seals. You would put your hands out so that I would grab yours. You taught me how to keep rhythm, sometimes by me standing on your feet so as to move mine with yours. I remember laughing the whole time you were spinning me. My favorite part was always when you dipped me at the end. The dancing never stopped between you and I. You were my best dancing partner all the way into adulthood and I will forever cherish those moments with you. You were one of the most forgiving mothers I know. I know life wasn’t always easy with me. I was far from a perfect child. Even when I was disrespectful or throwing a temper tantrum, you would discipline me, but you would always, always come into my room to talk to me about things. As angry as I was, I felt your love and sadness for what had happened. I carry that forgiveness on with my children now and I thank you for showing me that compassion. I always knew how talented you were in different aspects of life, but sadly, I’m only now realizing how much above par you really were. From all the Halloween costumes you would hand make for me and Stephen, to the special cakes you baked for our birthdays. Most people would see a yard of fabric and not know what to do with it. You? You would cut it, measure it, and sew it into a beautiful pageant dress, or my dress for 10th grade Homecoming. You tried to show me many times how to use a sewing machine, but I still can’t quite get the threading down. I owe many of my own talents to you. I can remember spending countless hours rehearsing my songs and dances for the talent portion of the pageant shows you put me in. You playing the part of the announcer while I walked out from around the hallway. I can still hear your voice, “And our next contestant is.....” I sing to this day because of you. I remember how when we went karaokeing together I would always ask you, “What do you think I should I sing?” You would often say, “How about My Heart Will Go On?”, and I would roll my eyes and say, “Ugh, that song is so played out though, mom. I’ve sung it like 100 times.” I usually ended up singing something else, but I wish so badly now that I would have sung what you wanted to hear. So I will sing it for you the next time at the karaoke bar. I know you’ll be there.

Amanda McDaniel - October 07 at 02:11 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Video Tribute #2



Williams-Thomas Funeral Homes - October 05 at 11:10 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Video Tribute



Williams-Thomas Funeral Homes - October 05 at 11:05 AM



“ Wonderful to see all these photos! Especially enjoyed seeing Mary Jean in her youth since I didn't meet my cousin until we were well into adulthood with children of our own. Key West, Florida was a Long way from Roosevelt, New York! Prayers and love from kristina

Kristina Riemer - October 05 at 06:28 PM



“ I was a classmate of Mary at Key West High class of 1971. I didn't know her very well. I do remember her smile. She always had a wonderful big smile for everyone. Also, her jet black hair was the envy of most of her female classmates I'm sure. Greg and family please accept my sincere condolences. Thank you for your wonderful and loving obituary detailing Mary's life. I feel that I know her a lot better know. God bless you and your family. Mary is watching over you all.

Earle Darby Petersen - October 04 at 04:15 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories of Mary Jean from Kristina



Kristina Riemer - October 02 at 10:00 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories of Mary Jean from Kristina



Kristina Riemer - October 02 at 09:58 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories of Mary Jean from Kristina



Kristina Riemer - October 02 at 03:30 PM



“ Greg my condolences to you and your family. Mary was a person to treasure what a lost to the world.

Georgia

Georgia Fair - September 29 at 11:16 AM