

## EVELYN MOCK HIRTLE - GEORGE

Evelyn Mock Hirtle George, renaissance woman, pioneering science educator and environmentalist who loved the beauty and the people of the Allegheny Valley, died on Friday, March 3rd in Oakmont. She was 97.

Evelyn was born at Magee Hospital on May 24, 1925, the first child of Dr. and Mrs. H.S.D. Mock of Clintonville, Pennsylvania, in Venango County. When she was still an infant, her father moved his practice to Cheswick, along the banks of the Allegheny where the adventures of her childhood, growing up in the midst of what was often more a community health clinic than a traditional home, played out.



Dr. Mock lived his practice, often taking his precocious daughter along while stitching wounds, setting broken bones and delivering babies. Evelyn's mother Alice Marcy Mock, who was born in a sod house on the Kansas frontier in 1896, needed all her pioneer resilience and resourcefulness to manage their home and her husband's practice through the Great Depression, World War II and decades that followed. In that bustling home surrounded by medicine and human drama, Evelyn learned to love science and the people of the Allegheny Valley.

Graduating from Aspinwall High School in the midst of World War II (1943), Evelyn entered the Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham) as a Chemistry major, which imbued her with an almost mystical regard for The Periodic Table of the Elements and a tremendous ability to cook, which she often described as "just chemistry." In 1945 she transferred to the University of Pittsburgh to prepare more specifically for medical school, but as the war was ending, her future husband, R.T. Hirtle II, returned home from the Army Air Force. In a swirl of post-war romance, they fell in love and were married.

In 1957, the Soviet Union shocked the world by launching "Sputnik," the first earth-orbiting satellite, throwing America into a space race with our cold-war adversaries. Science teachers became an instant priority and Evelyn, with no teaching certificate or experience, was quickly hired to teach at Har-Brack High School. A natural teacher and fascinated with all aspects of science, her career quickly blossomed. In 1962, Springdale's own Rachel Carson (also a Chatham alumna) published the landmark "Silent Spring" warning about the pesticide DDT polluting our water systems and endangering precious species like the Bald Eagle. The book played a seminal role in launching the American environmental movement. Evelyn was persuaded by Carson's compelling prose and in 1970 celebrated the first Earth Day with her students. Her activism played an important role in shaping Pennsylvania public school environmental education, a cause that was foremost in her mind when she co-founded Springdale's Rachel Carson Homestead Association in 1975.

She taught at what became Highlands High School for over 30 years, along the way earning a Masters and PhD ABD in education from the University of Pittsburgh and becoming head of the Highlands Science Department. To Evelyn, teaching was never a job, but a passion and a profession. She loved teaching and teachers. Evelyn didn't work at teaching— she *was* a teacher and her students inspired her so deeply that she was always too excited to sleep before the first day of school each fall. Those students went on to thrive as doctors, oceanographers and researchers often stopping by her home to tell how their fascination with science had begun with hers. Even at the end of her life, Evelyn never missed watching the Saturday morning high school academic competition on WQED.

Evelyn's first husband, R.T., passed away in 1986; in 1991 she married James George of Cheswick. By then, both Evie and Jim were retired and, until his death in 2007, they enjoyed an active, fun-loving civic and social life cherishing each other's companionship while engaged in their community and travelling the world. Evelyn's passion for nature was intertwined with her love of beauty and expressed in so many ways: fashion, design, gardening and years of study in Soghetsu Ikebana (Japanese flower arranging) in which she became an accomplished artist.

For the past 14 years Evelyn enjoyed living in Longwood at Oakmont where she met new friends, was reacquainted with old ones and received wonderful healthcare from a team led by the amazing Dr. Nagrib Manov, her gerontologist.

Evelyn is survived by her two sons, R. Tremaine Hirtle III of Fort Lauderdale, FL (Brenda) and Jonathan J. Hirtle of Saint Davids, PA (Debby) - three granddaughters, Susan Hirtle McEvoy (Jonathan), Diana Hirtle Wilson (Garrett), Katherine Clair Hirtle McDaniel (Charlie) and five great-grandchildren; Evelyn, Gloria, Georgia, Shepherd, and Carter.

She was especially close to her brother Dr. H. David Mock and his wife Annamae who preceded Evelyn in death. Their children, Dr. H.S. D. Mock II (Debbie) and Alice Mock Knapek (Rich), of Cheswick, have always been there to love, include and care for "Aunt Evie" for the many years after her sons moved away from the valley.

Evelyn was also blessed with two stepdaughters, Lynn George Schriener of Valencia, PA (Robert), Cynthia George Ondros of Cheswick (Michael) - eight step-grandchildren, Scott, Christopher, Hillary, Zachary, Seth, Nathan, Brian, Kelsey, and 15 step-great-grandchildren.

Friends will be received from 2 to 4 pm and 6 to 8 pm Wednesday, March 15 at the Charles B. Jarvie Funeral Home, 801 Pittsburgh St., Springdale, PA. A funeral service will be held at Cheswick Presbyterian Church, where Evelyn was a member for over 90 years, at 10:30am, Thursday, March 16.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Rachel Carson Homestead Association, P.O. Box 46, Springdale, PA 15144-0046. Donations can also be made online at <https://rachelcarsonhomestead.org/>