



## Shirley G Chase

July 8, 1925 - August 12, 2023

Artist and Athlete, Shirley G. Chase of Saint Augustine, Florida died on August 12, 2023 at the age of 98. Born on August, 7 1925 in Worcester, Massachusetts to Irene J. and William Ragnar Gustafson, she was the eldest of 4 children. Growing up she wanted to see more than her home town and was determined to have a husband and a life of adventure. While at Sargent College, now part of Boston University where she received a degree in Physical Therapy, she met Robert W. Chase, a WWII veteran and Harvard University student. They married a few days after they both graduated from their respective colleges.

With her first three children, she and her husband Bob, newly admitted in to the US Foreign Service, began a life of travel. Their first assignment in post-war Europe based was in The Hague, Netherlands (1952-1954). There she took classes in portraiture and had her fourth child. Then they moved to Montreal, Canada (1954-1957) for 3 years where she took classes in ceramics and got her teaching diploma. They moved to Beirut, Lebanon (1957-1959). There she taught the 3rd grade. With a revolution underway and heavily pregnant, she took her 4 children back to The Hague where she retained friends from her stay there earlier and had her 5th child. She had her first art exhibit using mixed media.

They returned to the U.S. for a short time and then moved on to Rabat, Morocco (1959-1962) where she enrolled in a sculpture class and began collecting antique Moroccan furniture and jewelry. This resulted in another art

exhibit. After returning to the US (1962-1966) she had her 6th child and became a physical therapist, using her college training for the first time and a job which she would return to whenever they were in the US. They lived in Damascus, Syria (1966-1967) and Jerusalem, West Bank (Israel) (1967-1969).

From 1969-1971, they lived in Mbabane, Swaziland (Eswatini) where she worked closely with a Swazi entrepreneur and a few others to start an arts-based clothing company and local tradesmen to open a collaborative crafts center open to this day.

In 1971 they returned to the US before heading overseas again, this time to Alexandria, Egypt where she worked with a school for girls who had failed their 6th grade exams and were no longer eligible for public education embroidery and rug making skills that could give them an income. From Egypt, Shirley moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia where Bob served as Consul General and Shirley occupied herself with a gardening column. In 1978 the couple moved to Tangier, Morocco which was their last overseas post.

They retired to Saint Augustine, Florida in 1980 enticed by the water, warm weather and ability to practice year-round sports. Shirley involved herself with the Garden Club, the Women's Club, the Anastasia Athletic Club, and the art scene where she entered numerous arts and crafts competitions. Her door was never locked and friends frequently stopped by to enjoy the hospitality. In her 70s, she began competing in the Senior Games, winning medals in her age group in swimming and traveling all over the US. In 2011 she set record for 85 to 90 year olds in the 500 meter free-style at the National Senior Games in Houston. She won her last race at the age of 97 in the National Senior Games last year.

She is survived by five of her children, Kristi Chase of Somerville, Massachusetts, Woody Chase, world traveler, Mikki Bernier of Montreal, Canada, Robin Chase of Cambridge, Massachusetts and Mark Chase of Somerville, Massachusetts, 2 grand-daughters, Cameron and Linnea Russell and 2 grand-sons, Dylan Russell and Matthieu Bernier as well as 2 great-

grandchildren.

There will be celebrations of life for her in Saint Augustine and in Massachusetts.

# Tribute Wall

SD

“ Always Enjoyed seeing Shirley at Florida Swim Meets. We travelled together to Lakeland, Fl. Shirley was a true inspiration to All Swimmers. She surely will be missed!  
Sally Moloney

sdm.lake@yahoo.com - August 24, 2023 at 08:47 PM

SS

“ Shirley was a beautiful lady inside and out. She always greeted you with a smile and kind words. My thoughts and prayers are with her family. RIP 🙏❤️🙏

Sandy Smollich - August 20, 2023 at 10:33 PM

SD

“ We only met Shirley a couple times after joining the Garden Club 4 years ago but we could tell she was an amazing person! Her artistic creations around her house made it a magical place to sit in her garden and visit. She was so kind to offer us plant clippings and one of her painted pots (it looks lovely on our patio). Perhaps her children could pass on a few of her pots other Hibiscus Circle members (let me know)? Rest in peace and prayers for the family.

Steve Davies - August 20, 2023 at 02:19 PM

RC

“ Hibiscus Circle had several meetings at Shirley's home. Her garden and art were always an exciting addition to our meetings. She happily shared many plants with one "The Devils Backbone", a beautiful succulent, has been passed on through out The Garden Club of St. Augustine. Shirley will be missed.

Rosemary Comtois - August 19, 2023 at 12:04 PM