

Sign In



Margaret Reno Hurchalla

December 11, 1940 - February 19, 2022

 Recommend

Share Obituary:



Tribute Wall

Obituary & Events

Obituary

Maggy Hurchalla, native Floridian, Florida environmentalist, and five-term Martin County Commissioner, died in Stuart, Florida on Feb. 19. She was 81. Hurchalla was recovering from a second hip surgery and looking forward to getting back into her beloved kayak again.

Born Margaret Sloan Reno on Dec. 11, 1940, in Miami, to father Henry Olaf Reno and mother Jane Wood Reno, trailblazing Florida journalist and adventurer. She was the third of four children that included sister Janet Reno, first female Attorney General of the United States who served under President Bill Clinton, brothers Robert Reno syndicated columnist for Newsday, and renowned Florida outdoorsman Mark Reno. Hurchalla was the last surviving member of her siblings.

Hurchalla was bathed in adventure at an early age, taking trips in 1947 into the fledgling Everglades National Park with her family where their car got stuck in the mud as often as not. In fact, getting stuck in the mud became the hallmark of all Reno adventures, or getting lost in a swamp, or going down dead-end rivers that disappeared underground. Her first job was teaching the then-emerging technology of SCUBA diving at a local dive shop as a 12-year-old, long before anyone cared about certifications or age.

Valedictorian of her class at Coral Gables Senior High, she went on to graduate with high honors in Psychology from Swarthmore College in 1962. It was at Swarthmore that she met her husband Jim Hurchalla and had her first child James in 1961, while she was still a student. Her college yearbook quote read "I'm working twice as hard but having three times as much fun. Every college girl should have a baby."

In 1963 she had her second child Robert, and when her husband finished his graduate degree in aeronautical engineering, they moved to Jupiter, Florida in 1964, where she had her youngest children, Jane and George. In 1968, she and Jim bought a parcel of land in Rocky Point in Stuart, a sparsely inhabited area at the time surrounded by mangroves on the Intracoastal Waterway. They built a modest Florida board and batten cypress house, and it would remain their home forever after. Hurricane David in 1978, Frances and Jeanne in 2004, and Wilma in 2005, all leveled fairly direct hits on the house but the house survived them all intact. Just as her mother had grown up with hurricanes in the late 1920's in Miami, Hurchalla grew up accustomed to a series of them in the late 1940s in Miami, and it left a lasting respect in her for nature's raw power.

After serving on a local Water Board and a commission to study turning Martin County into a charter county in 1972, she decided to throw herself further into local politics and got elected to the Martin County Commission in 1974. Her battles with the "status quo" were legendary in the early years as a commissioner, as she routinely found herself on the wrong end of 4-1 votes. Still, with the help of her dedicated supporters, she won successive reelections and became respected as an uncompromising warrior for the environment and public lands. However, what truly endeared her to her community was her accessibility and willingness to help anyone confounded with the process of local government. One of her first major successes she celebrated was the passage of a bond issue to purchase public beaches in the 1980s. That the ensuing celebration involved skinny dipping at a local public beach late at night with various county staff, a fellow commissioner, and other supporters of the measure, did not go unnoticed by the county gossip mill, and opponents tried to use it against her in the next election to the great amusement of her friends and family.

Her proudest achievement in public service was when the county passed its Comprehensive Plan for growth management in 1990, one of the first of its type in Florida. She won five terms as county commissioner campaigning to keep Martin County "a good place to live", with smart-managed growth. Her efforts are reflected today in the low-density high prosperity model Martin County enjoys, unique among all of its neighbors. She served on numerous commissions and committees at the regional and state level including Governor Askew's Blue Ribbon Transportation Committee, the State Comprehensive Plan Committee, Governor Chiles' Growth Management Task Force, and was Chairperson of the original Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council. Among the many awards she received for defending our natural resources are the Martin County Conservation Alliance lifetime award, the Audubon of the Everglades Conservation Award, Florida Association of Environmental Regulators - Environmentalists of the Year 1994, the Everglades Coalition "George Barley Conservationist of the Year Award" 2002, and the 2003 National Wetlands Award for Volunteer Leadership. Her work on wetlands conservation in Florida got her recognized nationally as the foremost expert on Florida's wetlands. She continued to serve on advisory councils such as the Governor's Commission for a Sustainable South Florida even after leaving office and remained involved in the battle for Everglades

restoration right up to her death.

She was a lifelong adventurer just as her mother before her had been, taking up whitewater kayaking in her 60's and paddling whitewater rivers all across the United States and in Costa Rica, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, and Peru. She made many dear friends along the way and enjoyed taking people along on her adventures. She joined kayaking trip in Veracruz, Mexico composed of women forty to fifty years younger, fearlessly dropping 20-foot-high waterfalls in her early 70's. In more recent years, she took great joy in leading kayak adventures of all ages and experience levels on trips through the backwaters of Martin County and the Everglades. She also loved SCUBA diving since her early indoctrination into it during the advent of the sport and went on diving expeditions with her husband around the world.

Her passion for her family and friends has left her most lasting legacy. Those connections and adventures led all that knew her to have a story about Maggy of their very own.

She is predeceased by her parents, Henry Olaf and Jane Wood Reno, her sister Janet Reno, and her brothers Robert and Mark Reno.

She is survived by her loving husband of 61 years, James (Jim); her son James, his wife Gretchen Hurchalla, granddaughter Kymberly Hurchalla, and grandson James Hurchalla of Stuart, Florida; her son Robert Hurchalla of Stuart, Florida, her daughter Jane Hurchalla and husband Ed Pettersen of Nashville, Tennessee; and her son George Hurchalla and his partner Tracee Wilkerson, and their children daughter Ava Weaver and son Hunter Weaver, of San Antonio, Texas.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations are suggested to Friends of the Everglades@ Everglades.org.

Hide 

Events

There are no events scheduled at this time.

f (<https://www.facebook.com/AllCounty/?fref=ts>)

t (<https://twitter.com/AllCountyFunera>)

Visit Us at Our Locations Across Southeast Florida

**All County Funeral
Home & Crematory**

1107 Lake Ave, Lake Worth,
FL

Phone: (561) 533-8878 (tel: (561)%20533-8878)

Del Lago Chapel

131 S. Lakeside Dr., Lake
Worth, FL

Phone: (561) 533-5111 (tel: (561)%20533-5111)

Treasure Coast Chapel

1010 NW Federal HWY,
Stuart, FL

Phone: (772) 692-4055 (tel: (772)%20692-4055)

**Pre-Arrangement
Center**

947 17th St, Vero Beach, FL

Phone: (772) 978-4400 (tel: (772)%20978-4400)

[Privacy Policy & Terms of Use](#)

Share a memory



[Privacy - Terms](#)