

Valeen "Val" Silvy

May 31, 1950 - August 31, 2011



Cancer cut short the life of a loving wife and mother, inspirational student advisor, colleague and friend. Valeen "Val" Silvy passed away August 31, 2011 at St. Joseph Hospital in Bryan, Texas.

Val was born on May 31, 1950 in Connecticut to Ralph and Helen Adams. The family moved to Big Pine Island in the Florida Keys where Val spent her formative years. Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico, Val developed a love of the natural world and of the wonders of water. She worked at the Florida Key Deer Wildlife Refuge on Big Pine Island where she met and fell in love with Nova Silvy.



Val and Nova were married on Big Pine Island on April 11, 1971. They celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary this year. After their marriage, Val and Nova moved to Southern Illinois University where he finished his doctoral degree and Val earned a BS degree. In 1974, they moved to College Station where Val continued her education earning a masters degree in parks and recreation from Texas A&M University. She later completed her doctorate in community planning from the University of Texas @ Austin.

Val's love of the natural world guided her life and career. She was a gifted educator and quickly developed a national reputation for creative educational exhibits and programs at nature centers and museums throughout the country. Her exhibits and programs were adopted by a number of National Parks, including Grand Canyon and LBJ Historic Park and at dozens of national wildlife refuges around the country. Val was the lead exhibit design consultant for the Austin Nature Center. Thanks to Val's work, visitors to many federal, state and local parks and nature centers have a greater understanding of the natural world.

From 1982-1989, Val served as the first Executive Director of the Brazos Valley Museum. Under her leadership the early Brazos Valley Museum expanded from two small classrooms and a reptile room to a now thriving facility. With her encouragement the museum provided programs for the entire family- a movement now pursued by much larger museums. Val involved everyone in the museum's success including professors, several county judges and commissioners, and many professionals still in the museum field. Memories of building exhibits still live in the hearts and minds of Val's friends and family. And even more importantly, many of our community teachers and leaders today were museum participants inspired by Val!

She loved working with students and from 1991 to 1994 Val was an instructor in the Recreation and Parks Department at Texas A&M University. She taught environmental education courses but, according to her students, offered advice on life skills and career choices. Val would remind her students that timing, persistence and hard work were keys to success. Her influence remained as former students would often call, or visit, seeking advice.

In 1995, Val began working on water education programs at Texas A&M University. She was especially proud of her role in helping establish a unique interdisciplinary masters and doctoral degree program in water management and hydrologic science at Texas A&M University. The program has been cited as a model by a number of organizations including the National Research Council. She served as the coordinator and student advisor for the program sending emails to her students until the day before her death.

Commitment to her community was important to Val. She served on the board of directors, or in leadership positions, for a number of civic organizations including the BCS Prenatal Clinic, the League of Women Voters, and the College Station Rotary Club. She was an advocate for proper medical care and diet for expectant mothers. Val was also active in the Brazos Valley Parkinson's Association.

Val was preceded in death by her parents, Ralph and Helen Adams.

She is survived by her husband, Nova; a daughter, Elizabeth; and a brother, Jeff Adams. She is warmly remembered by numerous in-laws, as a caring wife, mother and friend.

A memorial mass will be held at 2:00 pm on October 8, 2011 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in College Station followed by a 3:00 pm "Celebration of Life" in the church activity hall. She will return to the waters that she loved, as her ashes will be spread over the Gulf of Mexico at Big Pine Island in the Florida Keys.

Val touched the lives and hearts of hundreds of students, colleagues and friends. In recognition of her role in educating the next generation of water scientists, a Valeen Silvy Fellowship has been established at Texas A&M University Foundation.

Those who would like to honor Val's life may do so by making a contribution to the Texas A&M University Foundation at 401 George Bush Drive, College Station, Texas 77840. Please indicate on your check that it is for the Valeen Silvy Fellowship.



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