

Catherine “Cathy” Anne Wright Norris obituary



Catherine “Cathy” Anne Wright Norris, age 91, of Arlington, Va., died peacefully at home on June 14, 2026, from complications related to Parkinson’s disease. She was the wife of James A. Norris, a retired USAID foreign service officer. Cathy was born April 21, 1935, in Dalton, Ga., and was the eldest child of Hubert Davis Wright and Genevieve Pontrich Wright. Over the next 10 years, the Wright family lived in Charleston, S.C.; Arlington, Va.; and Norfolk, Va., before moving to Tokyo, Japan in 1946, marking the beginning of Cathy’s love of travel and exploring other cultures.

Returning to Norfolk in 1949, Cathy graduated as salutatorian of Granby High School, Class of 1953, where she was also the editor of the school newspaper and president of the Spanish club. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor’s degree in economics from Duke University, Class of 1957.

After working for the Federal Reserve in the Bureau of Research and Statistics in Washington, D.C., Cathy drove cross-country to California where she began graduate courses in economics at UC Berkeley in 1959. It was at UC Berkeley in 1961 when Cathy met James Arnold Norris, who was pursuing a Ph.D. in chemistry.

Cathy and Jim were married in 1963 and then made their way to Boston, where Jim was a post-doctoral fellow in the MIT chemistry department and began his studies of economics. They welcomed their first child in 1965 and then started their life overseas in 1966, six months after Jim began his career with the US Agency for International Development.

Over the next 37 years, Cathy and Jim, with their three children, lived and worked in Tunisia, Indonesia, Egypt, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Russia, and Egypt (again), before retiring in Arlington, Va. Cathy oversaw the landscaping of the Joint Embassy School campuses in Jakarta; trained Bangladesh Central Bank employees in the use of computers; managed the computerization of an agricultural university in Pakistan; and, as a contractor for USAID in Moscow, managed the development and implementation of an agricultural project in Russia.

She loved a competitive game of tennis; cooking and enjoying gourmet meals with friends and family; staying up all night to finish a book; discussing current events, movies, art, history, and politics; and planning and completing multiple home and garden renovations.

Cathy is survived by her husband of 63 years and dedicated caregiver for the past two and a half years, Jim; children: Suzanne Norris Bronzi (Luca), Erica Norris Perlman (David), and James

Wright Norris (Melinda); and grandchildren: Giulia Bronzi, Olivia Bronzi, Sofia Perlman, Wright Norris, Stella Norris, and Jimmy Norris. Cathy is also survived by many lifelong friends from college, graduate school, and her years of living overseas.

Cathy was preceded in death by her parents; sisters, Yvonne Floyd and Frances Wright; and brother, Hubert "Pete" Wright. She is survived by her sister, Mary "Beezie" Shiflet (Harvey), and her sister-in law, Marilyn Holt Wright.