



## Temple Tyree Powell

November 3, 1922 - November 4, 2012

Temple Tyree Powell was born on 3 November 1922 at Lynch Station, Virginia, in a house built by her father. She died 90 years later, almost to the day, in a house that has been owned by her family for 275 years and in a bed less than 100 yards away from the one in which she was born. In between, Temple traveled all over the world, ending her travels and returning in retirement with her husband to the place and home she loved, Oak Grove.

Elizabeth Temple Tyree - as she was christened - moved to Altavista as a small child and grew up there. Temple's early life was that of an only child who relied on her several cousins in close-by Lynch Station as surrogate siblings. It was a comfortable life, particularly by the standards of the South in the depression era. Her father, Paul Tyree, was an important man in town and later its mayor. In Temple's recollection of her youth, the president was always Franklin Roosevelt - he died when Temple was 22. She said her life took place against a backdrop that, until the advent of World War II, was what today can only be viewed as an inconceivably innocent time. Temple graduated from Mary Baldwin College in the final days of peace, and then went to work at the National Gallery of Art in wartime Washington and stayed there until 1947.

With the arrival in her life of a couple of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill graduate students in the late 1940s, Temple's early life, imbued with the values and security of tranquil small-town America, was about to come to an

end. In 1950, she married one of those UNC graduate students, Davis Powell of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and left Oak Grove, Altavista and all that she had known for a life as the wife of a member of the nation's foreign affairs establishment based in Washington, D.C. To sum up a severe learning curve, a lot of excitement and much frenetic activity in a phrase: during the 1950s, Temple had four children, interspersed with leaving the United States twice to live in Europe.

From the time she began her family, Temple put her serious energy into it. She always told her children that their father came first, but that they were each a close and continuing second. All her children agree it was a family forced back upon itself for support and friendship because of the frequent moves. It was Temple who made each temporary home a hearth at which she was available and constant in the face of the vicissitudes that life - with a large, mobile family in turbulent times - necessarily entails.

It is worth remembering the Europe to which Temple was introduced. At the time, the United States was preeminent in world affairs to a degree never before known by any nation in world history. The American colossus stood astride a devastated Europe, then the foreign policy establishment's unquestioned top priority. To spend a significant portion of her adult life as the wife of an official representative of the United States in Europe in the 1950s and early 1960s was to be in precisely the right place at exactly the right time in history to enjoy her nation's fleeting position of unparalleled privilege, and unchallenged status now long gone. They were heady times filled with challenges, work and glamour, to which Temple proved herself equal.

Temple, with her four children and husband, lived in Frankfurt, Germany; Vienna, Austria; and twice in Paris, France, the second time as the 1960s rounded into the 1970s. Tours abroad were broken up with tours in Washington, D.C. It was a life of entertaining and being entertained both for

fun and as a necessary component of official work. Day-to-day life overseas was conducted in a foreign language with different cultural norms and rules that had to be convincingly accommodated. Although often the pace was hectic or just plain hard work, Temple's life overseas as the heartbeat of a large family with significant outside obligations was eased by the relative affordability of domestic help during that post-war era. Children and the household had to periodically be packed up and moved to another country in pursuit of her husband's career, but once settled, Temple and her husband routinely spent three nights a week out on the town in foreign cities in what can only be described as glittering circumstances. For Temple, it was a magical time that ended with her return to a somewhat disassembled, if not necessarily quieter, existence with two teenage sons in Lynchburg, Virginia. Her husband was away for a tour in Vietnam and her older children were off at college. Once back in Washington, D.C., in the mid-1970s, Temple's household began to empty again as the last of her children left home to pursue their own lives and her own thoughts turned toward the place to which she had always wanted to return, Oak Grove.

With her husband's retirement in 1975, Temple (and Davis) moved back to Lynch Station and set about renovating Oak Grove, which had become run down after the deaths some time earlier of its residents - Temple's aunts Elizabeth Ewing and Roxie Tyree. She and Davis restored Oak Grove as well as modernized it. Upon that project's completion Temple took up an active life based at Oak Grove. She renewed old friendships and took part in activities such as the Altavista Little Theater, bridge clubs and later Tok Alon, and became a mainstay of her church, St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Altavista. She wrote poetry and read it at local ensembles of amateur poets collected for that purpose. And Temple and Davis still traveled, visiting Singapore, China, Greece, England and Germany, and - perhaps most tantalizing for Temple - went on an African safari. Anyone who knows Temple knows of her affection

for elephants and her concomitant collection of elephant figurines.

Somewhere along the way, Temple became one of the institutions in her circles at Lynch Station and in Altavista and Lynchburg. She always ascribed the transformation simply to age. She would say that if you live long enough, you get more respectability than might otherwise accrue. In her final years, Temple's world began to shrink from what at its height had been a world stage to what at the end was the front parlor of Oak Grove, converted to her final bedroom. There, surrounded by her family, she died in the early morning of 4 November. For now, it's still and empty at Oak Grove and the grave quiet, but sometimes, when the wind rustles the big trees Temple loved, nous nous souvenirs.

Temple's husband of 60 years, Davis B. Powell, Jr., died in December 2010. She is survived by her four children and their families, which include five grandchildren, three step-grandchildren, and two step-great-grandchildren: D. Bryan Powell and his wife Cynthia of Washington, D.C.; Ashby T. P. Brown and her husband Benjamin of Nellysford, Virginia, Ashby's children Erica Midkiff of Birmingham, Alabama, Terrell Midkiff of Lynchburg, Virginia, and Sarah Midkiff of Richmond, Virginia, and Ben's children, Claire and Colin Brown; Paul T. Powell and his wife Billie Jo of Buffalo, New York, and their son Matthew Powell and his wife Allison of Catonsville, Maryland; and James D. Powell and his wife Patricia of Altavista, Virginia, their daughter Haley Powell of New York City, Patricia's daughter Kelly Nance of Roanoke, and Kelly's children Layne and Kayla Nance.

A church/memorial service will be held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church of Altavista, Virginia, followed by burial in the family graveyard at Oak Grove. Temple will be buried in a casket handmade by her daughter Ashby, son-in-law Ben, grandchildren Erica, Haley, Terrell, Matthew, and Sarah, and friends Charles and Linda Eubanks. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to

DAWN (Donation-A-Week Neighbor), 1280-C Main Street, Altavista, Virginia, 24517, (434) 369-7937.

A funeral service for Temple Powell will be held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Altavista, Virginia, at 11 am on Wednesday, November 7, 2012. She will be buried in the graveyard at her home, Oak Grove, Lynch Station, Virginia, following the funeral. A reception for family and friends will be held in the house at Oak Grove at 2 pm, following the burial.

# Cemetery Details

## Oak Grove Cemetery

147 Dearing Ford Road  
Lynch Station, VA 24571

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

NOV 7. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Peter's Episcopal Church  
1010 Broad Street  
Altavista, VA 24517

# Tribute Wall



“ *Heartwarming Thoughts Boston Fern was purchased for the family of Temple Tyree Powell.*



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November 06, 2012 at 08:05 PM



“ *I am sending my deepest condolences to all of Temple's family. All the Powells's have always been so welcoming to me. I am here for you all if you need anything. My prayers and heart go out to you all.*



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November 04, 2012 at 09:20 PM

BG

*Temple was a true friend and a true Southern lady. I knew her for most of the 30 years I lived in Altavista...and she was my neighbor in Lynch Station. As former editor and manager of the Altavista Journal, I came to know many Altavista residents and their families. She was always special to me. Smart, considerate, gentle, and aristocratic...a lot like her mother. The family was a bedrock in Lynch Station and the Altavista area. I am blessed to have known her and her family. My sympathies and prayers go out to her many friends and to her family, who were her life's meaning.*

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**Betty Gilliam** - November 06, 2012 at 06:45 AM

BP

*It was a privilege to grow up at Oak Grove with Temple and Davis as my next door neighbors. She was a beautiful woman in every way. - Beth Gilliam Phillips*

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**Beth Gilliam Phillips** - November 07, 2012 at 02:34 PM