

- HELEN HEARD ETHERIDGE -

Artist / Teacher - 1932 - 2019

As soon as she was old enough to hold a pencil, crayon or brush, Helen Heard Etheridge began to sketch, draw and paint. She was fortunate to have an artist to learn from close by. Her grandmother, Helen Hobert Coleman, tutored young students from her Danville, Virginia home, beginning the 1930s.

Helen excelled in art at George Washington High School, impressing teachers and classmates alike with her uncanny ability to capture things she saw and bring them alive on paper or canvas.

Following her graduation, she attended Mary Washington University in Fredericksburg, Virginia where she furthered her art studies. During that time, she met Herbert Etheridge while on a beach trip to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. They married in 1952, settled back in Danville and had four children.

Juggling her considerable duties as a young mother, Helen also established herself as an accomplished portrait artist with commissioned paintings of many prominent residents of Danville including: Mayor Harry Wooding, Danville Register & Bee owners, Stuart and Walter Grant, WBTM radio host David "Hutch" Hutcheson and others. She also painted portraits of all of her children, as well as many family members and friends.

Helen later received her BFA in Art Studies at Averett University and went on to motivate middle school students, teaching them drawing, painting, pottery making, and abstract design at O.T. Bonner Middle School for 17 years.

Throughout her career, Helen exhibited her work at The Danville Museum of Fine Arts, The Danville Art League and Danville Community College. She held speaking engagements and lectures at University of Virginia, Virginia Art Education Association, National Art Education Association, The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and the Danville Area Association of Arts and Humanities.

In 1988 she joined the Peace Corps and served for a year in Ghana, West Africa and continued her passion as an art professor at the college level. She was commissioned to design the cover and illustrations for the Peace Corps Information Packet during her year in Ghana. While there, she collected local art and brought it home, displaying it in a space she called, "my Africa room." The experience was a source of great pride for her and an enduring inspiration for her family.

All four of Helen's children pursued creative careers. Her oldest daughter, Patricia, is a former CNN correspondent and now a writer in Mexico City, Mexico. Her son, Tom, is a gifted bluegrass musician in Marin County, California. Her middle child, Annie, is an artist, photographer and photo editor in New York City and Marseille, France. And her youngest, Janet, is a historian and poet, also in Marin County, California.

All who knew, and loved her, will remember always her attention to detail, quick wit and the enduring legacy of her art.