



## Elinor Henderson Swaim

January 7, 1919 - June 14, 2011

### Elinor Henderson Swaim

Elinor H. Swaim, 92, a distinguished public servant on the local, state, and national

levels, died on Tuesday at her home on Richmond Road in Salisbury. She will be remembered for her significant contributions in the fields of education, health, religion, the arts, and politics.

Born in Burlington on January 7, 1919, daughter of John Leland Henderson and Moffitt Sinclair Henderson, Mrs. Swaim attended UNC-G and taught for three years in Chapel Hill High School before accepting a fellowship for graduate study at UNC-Chapel Hill. She was a member of the School of Public Health's first graduate class in health education. As one of North Carolina's first health educators, she played a leading role in the early days of the N.C. Heart Association and the N.C. Cancer Society. From 1943-1947 she hosted a weekly radio program on public health issues, and in 1945 she shared the platform with Eleanor Roosevelt when she spoke at the National Planned Parenthood Association meeting in New York.

Mrs. Swaim was a tireless champion of the arts. She served on the Board of Directors for the N.C. Arts Council, the Alliance for the Arts in Education, WDAV Radio for the Arts at Davidson College, was a charter member of the North Carolina Symphony Council, a symphony trustee for 12 years, and was president of the Salisbury-Rowan Symphony Guild.

Elinor's service through the church was deep and wide. A member of First Presbyterian Church, she was one of the first two women elected to the office of Elder. She served as Clerk of Session, as a member of Presbytery and Synod Councils, as a member of General Assembly's Committee on Theological Education, as a commissioner to General Assembly, and was the first woman to serve as a Trustee of Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond.

In politics she served as president of the N.C. Federation of Republican Women, as Vice Chairman of the State Republican party, and for 8 years as Chaplain of the National Republican Women. She published three books of prayers for political gatherings. As energetically as she campaigned for her party, she was always committed to bipartisan goals based on a recognition of shared values. She welcomed the chance to have a conversation with anyone.

Mrs. Swaim's major avocation has been as a supporter of libraries. She first became a library trustee in Asheboro in 1947, then went on to chair the N.C. State Library Commission. She was a member of the Governor's Commission on Basic Skills and the Alliance for Math and Science.

In 1988 Mrs. Swaim was a presidential appointee to the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and represented the commission at a landmark conference in Barcelona, Spain. She also chaired the commission's Native Americans Committee and enjoyed the trips to tribal lands and friendships with tribal leaders that ensued. In 1992 Mrs. Swaim organized the Rowan Community of Readers – 30 agencies working for literacy – and became its first co-chairman. In 1993 she helped to organize the Rowan Public Library Foundation and became its first president. While chairing the library trustees, she led Rowan County's first successful bond effort in 25 years to build a new main library. She also helped lead campaigns for four new public library buildings. In recognition of this and her many other acts of public service, she twice received the Governor's Award, "The Order of the Long Leaf Pine," for outstanding service to her state.

Remarkably, in light of her myriad accomplishments in the public sphere, Elinor will most be remembered by some for her ability to dance with items balanced on her head. As one commendation noted, “To Elinor – our ‘level-headed leader’.”

Mrs. Swaim is survived by her husband of 70 years, Wilborn S. (Bill) Swaim, her daughter, Moffett Churn of Raleigh, her sons Douglas Swaim of Charlotte and David Swaim of Salisbury, and seven grandchildren.

The Service of Committal will be held at the National Cemetery in Salisbury at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 22, with a Service of Witness to the Resurrection at 2:00 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church. The family will greet friends in Lewis Hall at the church following the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the Rowan Public Library Foundation P.O. Box 4039, Salisbury, NC 28145-4039.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Elinor has been a dear friend of mine for many years. We served together on various presbytery committees. We were on the Committee on Ministry for six years. I will always remember our many spirited political conversations and debates. She was a great mentor to me on Presbyterian church affairs during my tenure as moderator of Salem Presbytery.*###imported-begin###Rev. Ivan W. Lowery###imported-end##

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June 18, 2011 at 01:19 PM



“ *Doug, It was my pleasure to meet your elegant Mother at the Carson House. I thanked Her for Her dedication to the CH and particularly for giving us you, to be on the board. I was so impressed as I read all she had done. What a lady! My condolences to You most especially and then to all your family. Love Sandi*###imported-begin###sandi rabb###imported-end##

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June 18, 2011 at 12:40 PM



“ *Mr. Swaim & Family, I share with you in your loss. Elinor was a dear, dear friend. She was a true Southern lady who was always cheerful and beautiful. She and I had a mutual admiration relationship and I will always remember her many roles in the library world. It was always a pleasure when our paths crossed. I send my love to you all.*###imported-begin###Gene D. Lanier###imported-end##

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June 18, 2011 at 12:28 PM



“ *My sincere condolences to you all. Elinor was such a delightful lady and will be much missed. I always enjoyed seeing her at church - she was always smiling.*

*May you feel the comfort of our Lord in your time of loss.*

*Judy Mabe##imported-begin##Judy Mabe##imported-end##*

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June 17, 2011 at 11:10 AM



“ *Our memories and years of working with Elinor and Bill will always be cherished in our hearts. Elinor always presented a smile and determination to make Rowan County a better place to live. Through her actions, she cared for all.##imported-begin##Tim and Amanda Russell##imported-end##*

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June 17, 2011 at 08:28 AM