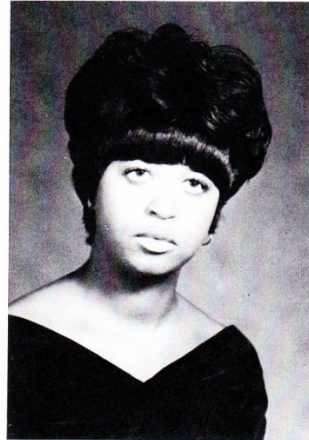




Coppin 1970 Yearbook



Lorraine Bass

Lorraine B. Stills, a veteran Baltimore public school educator whose career spanned more than four decades and who had been selected as Teacher of the Year, died May 11 at her Crownsville home of pancreatic cancer. She was 67. The daughter of Matthew Bass and Mabel Nunn Bass, Lorraine Bass was born and raised in Baltimore and graduated in 1965 from Dunbar High School. She earned a bachelor's degree in 1969 from what is now Coppin State University and a master's degree from what is now Morgan State University. She also held a master's degree in reading from the Johns Hopkins University. Mrs. Stills began her teaching career in 1969 at Northwood Elementary School, where she taught kindergarten through fifth grade. In 1977, she joined the faculty as a reading specialist at Northern Parkway Junior High School, where she met her future husband, Gordon Stills, who had been principal of the school since 1978. The couple chose an unlikely place to celebrate their 1981 nuptials. They were to be held at Northern Parkway Junior High School. The soon-to-be Mrs. Stills, who was on a "planning period break," and Mr. Stills, who had been excused from bus duty that afternoon, were married in a

third-floor counselor's office by Michael Franch, the leader of the Baltimore Ethical Society.

The Baltimore Sun reported at the time that it was "probably the only such ceremony held in a city school."

"In fact, there's a joke going around that this is what principals are going to have to do to keep good teachers — of course, the teachers' contract will have to be rewritten so that principals won't be permitted to marry teachers during their planning periods," her husband told the newspaper.

Mrs. Stills, who later taught reading at Harlem Park, Lombard and Winston middle schools, retired in 2013 from Francis Scott Key Middle School, after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

She and Sharon E. Watts, who retired in 2011 as manager of special education at Gwynn Falls Elementary School, have been friends for 49 years.

"We met on the first day of college, when we started classes together," said Ms. Watts.

"She was a dedicated, orderly and a no-nonsense teacher. Everything had to be in its place," she said. "She seldom ever had any discipline problems and the children always reached out to her. She was just a very dedicated and punctual teacher."

"In fact, the junior high school students loved her so much that they would go to her for help if one of them got in trouble with the principal," said her husband.

One day a student had been sent to the principal's office for being on the wrong floor when he went to visit a school buddy.

After explaining to the student that being on the wrong floor was in violation of school rules, she "agreed to be a character witness for the student," said Mr. Stills.

Mrs. Stills earned a reputation during her years teaching as being the first to arrive in the morning and the last to leave at the end of the day.

Because of her popularity, Mrs. Skills was selected as Teacher of the Year, said Ms. Watts.

Ms. Sills, Mrs. Watts, Elaine Brown and June Carrington-Allen, who all started college classes together, formed a tight circle of friendship that went back 49 years.

They ate lunch together once a week, never missed celebrating birthdays, and celebrated other important life events, said Ms. Watts.

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"Lorraine just loved teaching, and she'd say to us near the start of school, 'Hey, girlfriend, help me get my classroom ready,'" said Ms. Watts.

"When Lorraine was diagnosed with cancer, the friends were present for all of her chemotherapy treatments," said Mr. Stills. "Her diagnosis of pancreatic cancer was a blow to everyone." She was a 21-year survivor of [breast cancer](#).

Through all of her treatments and endless doctor appointments, Mrs. Stills never complained, her husband said.

"She cleared her mind of distractions and focused on her spirituality and her faith," he said. "While fighting her battle with cancer, Lorraine was teaching everyone how to live and how to die. Always the teacher."

Mrs. Stills enjoyed eating out with her husband and friends at the Double-T Diner or Golden Corral.

"Everyone who knew Lorraine knew she had a passion for eating," said Ms. Watts, who said her friend had left instructions on what was to be served at her funeral luncheon.

"She said she wanted macaroni and cheese, baked and fried chicken, green beans, potato salad at her repast," said Ms. Watts. "She also said, 'I want those rolls from Sam's Club even though I won't be there to eat them.'"

Mrs. Stills enjoyed attending family and holiday gatherings.

Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday at First Apostolic Baptist Church, Caroline and Lombard streets.

In addition to her husband, Mrs. Stills is survived by three stepsons, federal Judge Andre Davis and Noel Stills, both of Baltimore, and Quinn Stills of Los Angeles; two stepdaughters, Adrian Mosely of Baltimore and Sanova Stills of Silver Spring; a brother, Needham Jones of Baltimore; three sisters, Mary Rose Wilson, Jeanette M. Lewis and Mary Frances Jones, all of Baltimore; 16 nieces; and a nephew.