



Rebecca Jean Hilliard

DEC 19, 1953 - JAN 8, 2025



Scan to Visit

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Events	Page 7



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Rebecca (Becky) Hilliard, beloved mother, sister, aunt, niece, cousin and friend, lover of family and friends, nature, horses, dogs, fun and the Florida Gators, passed away Wednesday evening on January 8, 2025, a few weeks after her 71st birthday, after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease.

Known for her ever-present smiles, laughter, and vibrance, Becky was a joy to all who knew her. She was quick with a quip or funny comment, and inherited her father's sense of humor and literary excellence and her mother's social IQ and love of travel. Her presence completed every gathering, and her absence now leaves a staggering void.

Despite there already being a perfect child in the family (her brother George Clifton (“Tony”) Hamm), Becky was born on December 19th, 1953 in Tampa, Florida to Clifton Cleveland (Cleve) Hamm, Jr., and Nomie Jean Hamm, piano teacher and homemaker. Throughout their lives, Becky and Tony affectionately and jokingly referred to each other as “favorite sister” and “favorite brother.”

During those early years, every other weekend was spent at the home of Becky's grandparents in Bartow, Florida. There she and Tony would play, fight, fish with their Dad, read and spend hours looking for shark's teeth in the gravel driveway dredged from Tampa Bay. Becky would visit the horses that were corralled by the nearby playground down the street, perhaps getting an idea for her later home. They would look forward to visiting the drugstore their Grandfather managed, complete with a soda fountain, and always included getting a lime sherbet cone. Then they would go around the corner, rummaging around the local small book store. Sometimes they would go to the library, or to the local movie theatre to see movies that every other town had two years before. She and Tony had a wonderful small town early childhood.

Becky was all in. One Christmas, she and Tony knew that the presents would be good – new bikes. Their father worked very late, usually getting home after midnight. They were not allowed to wake their parents until 6 a.m. They were too excited to wait. Around 1 a.m., they snuck around



Obituary

Rebecca Jean Hilliard

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the house and advanced every clock, including the watches, to 6 a.m., then ran into their parents' bedroom shouting, "it's Christmas!" Their Dad said, "Jesus, I feel like I just went to bed." They got up and Becky and Tony tore into the gifts, while their parents sat bleary-eyed. They rode the new bikes up and down the street in utter and complete darkness. Their Dad said, "Why is it still so dark?" Becky and Tony started giggling, and explained what they did. Cleve said, "That's pretty good. I'm going back to bed. Don't ever do that again." In retrospect, every bad thing that they ever did was Becky's idea.

The family moved to Lakeland, Florida in 1963 when Cleve became the Managing Editor, and later the Executive Editor, of "The Ledger" newspaper in Lakeland. Becky's life centered around tap-dancing, piano lessons, clarinet, friends and a series of doomed pets. She had parakeets that were devoured by a cat, a beagle that was run over twice and survived, and two rabbits that escaped the hutch, never to be seen again. Ultimately, she successfully took care of a menagerie.

Becky attended Southwest Junior High and Lakeland Senior High, graduating in 1971. She was accepted into the Honors Program at the University of Florida and attended for a quarter before returning to Lakeland to complete her Associate of Arts degree at Polk Junior College. While in high school, Becky met and fell in love with Lester Henry ("Butch") Hilliard, Jr., and they eventually married in 1973.

By this time, Becky had started working at a law firm in Lakeland as a legal secretary, and she found that she excelled in this profession. After a few years, she and Butch moved to Colorado, following life-long friends Steve and Jan Early. They remained there for five years, enjoying the natural bounty that Colorado offered. However, they decided to return to Tallahassee, Florida in 1980, eventually making their home on 14 acres of land in rural Leon County, a stone's throw from their friends Jan and Steve, who had also returned. There they built a house and started acquiring animals.

Throughout her life, Becky was passionate about horses, and she finally had a place for one. She finally got one, then got another, and a donkey- along with dogs, cats, guinea pigs, snakes, and hamsters. It was a wonderful place for friends and family, with enough room to roam and for children, adults, and animals to play.

In 1980, Becky called Tony to tell him that she had obtained a position at Hopping, Boyd, Green, Sams & Smith law firm as a legal assistant. "Guess who I'll be working for? Carlos Alvarez!"



Obituary

Rebecca Jean Hilliard

DEC 19, 1953 - JAN 8, 2025

Although Tony's actual response cannot be printed, he was excited. Becky worked at Hopping for 17 years, and later worked at Holland Knight, also as a legal assistant.

By far the most important and fulfilling part of Becky's life were her daughters, Amy and Allison. Amy Rebecca Hilliard was born to Becky and Butch on May 14th, 1986, and Allison Jean Hilliard, now Allison Lucas (Chad), was born October 27th, 1989. Becky imparted to them both her love of nature, reading, animals, travel and fun. The time she spent with Amy and Allison were treasured beyond measure. They loved adventuring together across the world being silly gooses and laughing hysterically at the most inappropriate times. They developed a slight obsession with watching period piece shows and movies- and the occasional overly dramatic reality shows.

Becky's interests were varied but leaned toward adventurous, and she and Butch took up scuba-diving, hiking and camping. With friends Carlos Alvarez and Donna Dillon, she hiked Yellowstone, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon and parts of Canada. (Carlos wrote a touching tribute to Becky on Facebook.) Becky and Amy were roller-coaster dare-devils and would choose a corkscrew upside turn over any wimpy ride (Allison's speed). With Donna and mother Nomie, she traveled to Paris; on her 50th birthday she tandem sky-dived! She attended the insane and sandy festivities of Burning Man several times. Alas, all prints and negatives of the Burning Man photos have been lost and/or destroyed. Or will be.

To get a glimpse of Becky's whimsical sense of humor, several close friends of Becky made up a group of fierce and strong women who collectively referred to themselves as the W.D.'s, in keeping with their love of fun, mischief and frivolity. (They know who they are, but W.D. stands for "Whore D'Oerves." Surely ironic. Surely.) They traveled to a number of places over the years, and were later reportedly banned from ever returning. That was probably exaggerated in the retelling, however, and it was really a book club.

The stories are endless...there was the time her brother convinced her (it took absolutely no effort) to impersonate the personal assistant of a famous actress to a group of ER nurses, and she pulled it off. Other stories will no doubt be shared and laughed about in days, months and years to come.

Becky will be sorely missed by all those who had the pleasure to know her; She is survived by her daughters Amy Rebecca Hilliard and Allison Jean Lucas and son-in-law Chad Lucas; her former husband Lester Henry ("Butch") Hilliard, Jr., her brother George ("Tony") Hamm and sister-in-law Maria Hamm; her nephews Paul Christopher Hamm and Alex Cleve Hamm and Alex's wife



Obituary

Rebecca Jean Hilliard

DEC 19, 1953 - JAN 8, 2025

Yinny, and great-nephew Carlos Evan Hamm, all of Tallahassee; her niece Mollie Amanda Hagerty, Mollie's husband Christopher Hagerty and great-niece Eliza Marie Hagerty of Alpharetta, Georgia. She is also survived by her mother's brother, uncle Col. George Burnham ("B") Lott, Jr. (U.S. Army, ret.), and his wife, dear aunt Lois Sawyer Lott and cousins George Burnham ("Barry") Lott, III, his wife, Pamela, and their two sons, Eli and Liam Lott, and Melissa Lott Jordan, her husband Robert ("Rob") Jordan, all of Orlando, Florida; and their sons Graham Jordan of Atlanta, Georgia, Travis Jordan of Gainesville, Florida and Luke Jordan, of Chicago, Illinois. She is also survived by her father's brother, uncle Joseph C. Hamm, and his daughters, cousin Angela ("Angie") Hamm and her daughter Christina Hamm, and cousin Sarah Rivers (Fred), all of Lakeland, Florida.

Becky was predeceased by her parents, Clifton Cleveland Hamm, Jr. (1927-1984), and Nomie Jean Lott Hamm (1929-2011), and dear friend William Briggs Goddard (1956-2021).

Allison, Amy and Tony would like to gratefully thank Becky's dear friends- Elizabeth Bevington, Sarah Butters and Jan and Steve Early for their repeated acts of kindness, gentleness and love, particularly during Becky's stay at Westminster the last three years. Our appreciation for their selflessness cannot be overstated.

Consistent with Becky's wishes, an informal Celebration of Life is planned for Saturday, January 18th, at Ology Brewing- Northside, 2910 Kerry Forest Parkway, Tallahassee from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Come visit with family and friends, reminisce about Becky, and although there will no doubt be a few tears, prepare to laugh.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to an animal charity of your choice.



Events


Rebecca Jean Hilliard

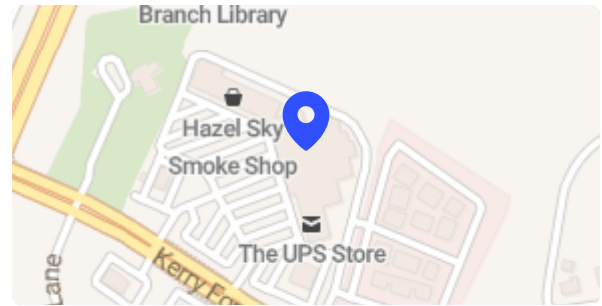
DEC 19, 1953 - JAN 8, 2025

Celebration of Life

 **Saturday**, January 18, 2025

 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM ET

 **Ology Brewing Co. (Northside)**
2910 Kerry Forest Pkwy., Tallahassee FL 32309





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Rebecca by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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