
Lovie Beard Shelton Obituary

Lovie Beard Shelton of Washington, one of the first nurse-midwives to practice in North Carolina, went to be with her Lord and Savior on Friday morning, March 29th, 2013. Lovie was born June 20, 1925 in Bailey Township, Nash County to Octavia Brantley Beard and John Edmond Beard. Her first exposure to midwifery came through the traditional African American lay midwives, also known as granny women, who delivered the babies of the tenant farmers on the Beard farm. Lovie attended Atlantic Christian College in Wilson before joining the Cadet Nurses Corps during WWII. She obtained a nursing degree from Norfolk Hospital in Virginia in 1946. After working briefly for a country doctor in Bailey, Lovie began a degree in public health nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It was there that she "caught on fire" to become a nurse-midwife. Her teachers arranged for her to spend a few months in Kentucky with nurse-midwives at the world-famous Frontier Nursing Service (FNS), where she impressed FNS director Mary Breckinridge with her passion and commitment to midwifery. After Lovie graduated from the UNC public health program in 1948, Breckinridge arranged a scholarship for her for to train as a midwife at the Simpson Memorial Maternity Pavilion at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Scotland. Lovie graduated from the midwife program in 1950. Upon her return to N.C., Lovie became the first public health nurse in Pamlico County. In addition to setting up the health department nearly single-handedly, she ran maternity clinics and supervised the handful of granny midwives still practicing in the county. In 1952, she married Marshall P. Shelton Sr. and moved to Beaufort County, where she joined the staff of the Beaufort County Health Department. Midwifery was always her passion, however, and in 1957 she left the health department to go into full-time midwifery. Her husband died in 1962. As a widow with four young children to support, she returned to the Beaufort County Health Department in 1968, but continued to deliver babies on the side. In 1971 she graduated from East Carolina University as a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. She retired from the health department in 1988 but continued to deliver babies in North Carolina homes until 2001. In more than 50 years of midwifery work, Lovie Beard Shelton delivered more than 4000 babies in Beaufort, Martin, Pitt, Craven, Nash, Hyde, Wilson, and Pamlico county homes, sometimes staying as long as 20 hours in a home to support the laboring woman. She rarely received more than \$40 for a birth, and she never turned down a patient who was unable to pay. A devout Christian, she saw her midwifery work as a calling and felt herself to be working in partnership with God. In 1998 her midwifery work was featured in an exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh. A set of her midwifery equipment is in the museum's permanent collection. For more than 25 years she was an active member of First Baptist Church of Chocowinity, where she headed the Special Events Committee. More recently she was a member of Wares Chapel United Methodist Church. She also volunteered with Hospice and the Carolina Organ Procurement Association. She is survived by three children: Nancy Mitchell, Wesley Shelton and Missy Sutton, all of Washington; five grandchildren: Carol Ellison and husband, Eddie Ellison, Joy Davis, Marshall "Bo" Sutton, Thomas Sutton and Brantley Sutton; and 3 great-grandchildren: Christina Ellison, Eddie Ellison II, and Blake Davis. She is also survived by one sister, Octavia Bowman and her husband, Bill, of Colonial Heights, Virginia. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, son (Marshall Shelton, Jr.), granddaughter (Shanna Marie Shaffer), three sisters and two brothers. A home visitation will take place on Saturday, March 30th, 2013 from 5pm to 8pm at Lovie's home. There will be a graveside service on Sunday, March 31st, 2013 at 2pm at Pamlico Memorial Gardens with Reverend Joan Fischer presiding. Following the funeral, a Celebration of Life will be held at her home, 2305 North Market Street. All are invited to bring musical instruments. Paul Funeral Home & Crematory of Washington is honored to serve the Shelton family.