



# Linda Duke Francis

JAN 27, 1939 - DEC 24, 2025



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# Linda Duke Francis

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**L**inda Gay Duke Francis lived at the intersection of vision and action.

She quietly passed away the morning of Christmas Eve 2025. Born January 27, 1939, in Stanly County, North Carolina, Linda was the daughter of the late James Claude Duke and Thelma Duke Forrest, and sister to Jimmy Duke of Albemarle. She was a faithful attendee of First Presbyterian Church of Albemarle, where she shared her love of music through singing hymns and participating in the church choir.

Trained in Home Economics at East Carolina University—an education that, in her era, encompassed design, management, logistics, and systems thinking—Linda built a career that shaped homes, businesses, and communities across North Carolina.

Her professional life began in public service, working more than a decade in social services at the state level in Atlanta Georgia, auditing county programs across multiple jurisdictions to ensure compliance and protect critical funding.

By the late 1960s and 1970s, Linda transitioned into sales, marketing, and business systems in Atlanta, Ga, later in New York, NY. In male-dominated industries, she consistently outperformed peers, earned repeated sales awards, and was known for her ability to understand complex systems, and proved herself equally adept at persuasion and precision.

Returning to Albemarle in early 1970s, Linda became a driving force behind downtown revitalization and civic beautification. Working with the City of Albemarle, the Mayor's Office, and the Stanly County Chamber of Commerce, she led public-private initiatives from Co-Chairing the Federal Bicentennial Celebration in Albemarle - and painting fire-hydrants like revolutionary soldiers- to the Beautification committee to improve storefronts, public spaces, and the visual character of the city. Using graphic renderings—well ahead of their time—she helped stakeholders see what was possible, often delivering award-winning results with minimal budgets



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by leveraging donated labor and materials. She also played an integral part in the facilitation of the new Courthouse Town Square Park.

Linda remained deeply engaged in community leadership through the 80s. She co-chaired Stanly County's Mayfest, raised all funds for the county-wide celebration, and received the Chamber's Outstanding Achievement Award 1983. She served as President and Vice-President of the Community Concerts Association, was active in the PTA, led a Girl Scout troop, restored a 100-year-old home largely with her own labor, and raised her daughter as a single parent while selling ads for the local radio station WZKY.

In 1986, Linda founded Haute Couture Services, a multidisciplinary design and consulting business offering custom clothing, interior design, wardrobe consulting, event planning, and catering. Her work blended aesthetics with logistics, producing cohesive environments—homes, events, and wardrobes—that reflected both beauty and function. She also founded and ran earlier ventures in business forms brokerage and temporary staffing, handling financing, operations, sales, and bookkeeping herself.

Also during this time, Linda took on complex civic challenges that required long-term planning and persistence. One of her most consequential efforts was her role in securing the remodel and modernization of Albemarle's existing post office facility. She proposed reorienting the building by making the rear entrance the primary public entrance, addressing safety concerns associated with the original front access and improving space for public use. Advancing the project required sustained work with local officials and correspondence with state and federal officials, including U.S. Senator Richard Burr.

She founded the Albemarle Cemetery Foundation, Inc. and, for more than a decade, personally led the restoration and preservation of the Albemarle Cemetery. In addition to raising tens of thousands of dollars, she was directly involved in physical cleanup of the grounds, repair and resetting of gravestones, planting over 50 trees, construction of a perimeter fence, and acquisition of additional land. She also conducted and directed extensive research to identify, document, and map burial plots and the individuals interred there, including chronological listing by birth date, death date, and a military service listing. An effort which led the Stanly County Historic Preservation Commission to grant Linda the Individual Award for Preservation 1996. She was also granted Governor's Award 1987, for outstanding Volunteer Service, as well as Woman of the Year award 1998, by the Albemarle Women's Club.



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Linda was an active member of the Daughters of the Revolution and discovered that she was a descendant of one of Stanly county's first settlers. She is Survived by her Daughter Keely Francis Owens, and her Husband Stephen Craig Owens of Kitty Hawk, 2 Grandchildren Stryker Duke Owens of Florida and Sadie Lucille Owens of Kitty Hawk; and cousins Charles Shoe and Tommy Shoe, both of Concord.

“...She has given of herself, her talent, abilities, energy, time and even physical labor in tackling projects most people would never even think of” - Linda Moose, SNAP December 31st 1998. Her legacy is one of competence, creativity, and determined authority —the kind that leaves places better than she found them.

A Service of Remembrance will be held on February 28th at 2:00 at the CB Crook Pavilion at the YMCA in Albemarle, where the family will welcome stories from family and friends to celebrate her life well lived and all her contributions to this world.

In lieu of flowers, memorials can be sent to Stanly Funeral Home. Linda's family would like to donate a bench in her honor of her lifelong community service to be dedicate in the Albemarle cemetery. These memorial gifts will be used toward the purpose of the bench.



# Events

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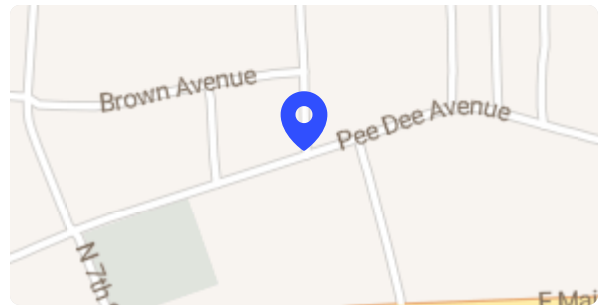
## Celebration of Life

- Saturday**, February 28, 2026
- 2:00 PM ET
- C B Crook Pavillion**  
115 C. B. Crook Drive, Albemarle NC 28001



## Cemetery Details

- Albemarle Cemetery**  
Pee Dee Avenue, Albemarle NC 28001





## Tribute Wall

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**Caroline Vlasis** shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Dearest Keely, you have been in my thoughts and prayers! The obituary is terrific. You know how close your mom & my mom were ❤️. I have not known how to reach you- & I have tried 4 times in last weeks to post here; not sure why I could not, but I have thought of you & your mom every day. I wanted to post this great picture of your Mom w/her dear friends & classmates. Sending you all my love!!



February 27 at 1:15 PM



**Tommy Taylor** posted:

Keely, I'm sorry for your loss.

February 23 at 8:25 AM



**Caroline Vlais** shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

February 27 at 1:15 PM





## **Memories only last if you share them**

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



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