



## Margaret Britton Vaughn

July 16, 1938 - June 27, 2026

Margaret Britton Vaughn, fondly known as “Maggi,” the esteemed and cherished Poet Laureate of Tennessee since 1995, passed away June 27, 2026 in her beloved small town of Bell Buckle, Tennessee. The population of the town is sadly now 528.

Born in Murfreesboro, Tennessee on July 16, 1938, she leaves behind a remarkable legacy as a poet, songwriter and storyteller who celebrated Southern culture and humanity through her art. Her work touched many through her vivid portrayal of rural and small town life.

She is preceded in death by her parents Winfred Vaughn and Mary Rebecca Vaughn, and her younger brother Winfred Miles “Bubba” Vaughn, and is survived by her chosen family of Shirley Hall and Dr. Carole Brown Knuth, bonus-granddaughter Gracelyn Howard, her nieces Wynn Graves and Cindy Shaw, her sister in law Nancy Vaughn, as well as the entire town of Bell Buckle, her legions of fans and her vast literary legacy.

From a young age, Maggi knew her calling was in writing; she declared her ambition to be a poet and country music songwriter in third grade.

After moving to Gulfport, Mississippi with her family, she was exposed to a broader cultural spectrum, influencing her views which she wove into her poetry. While there, she broke the glass ceiling as the first female sales person in Mississippi at the Daily Herald in Gulfport.

Maggi spun tales of her time in school when she attended Gulfport High School, Mississippi Southern College- Perkinson Campus, and completed her

degree at Middle Tennessee State University. She gave up a 17 year career in advertising at the Nashville Banner to pursue her songwriter full time.

She authored songs for country legends like her life-long friend Loretta Lynn, Conway Twitty and Ernest Tubb, and collaborated on plays and musicals inspired by Southern life. She is the co-writer of the Grammy-nominated song "I Miss Being Mrs. Tonight." She was signed to the Wilburn Brothers music publisher Sure-Fire Music.

Her writer's voice was shaped by and tuned to country radio stations.

Maggi's service as Poet Laureate of Tennessee is one of the longest serving poet laureates in United States history. She was appointed Poet Laureate in 1995.

Maggi published numerous poetry collections including *Acres That Grow*, *Fortasting Heaven: Conversations With Mark Twain at Quarry Farms*, *America Showing Her Colors in Black & White*, *You're Laughing, Ain't Ya God?*, *Bell Buckle Biscuits: Stories*, and one of her favorites *The Light in the Kitchen Window*. Her works often explored themes of heritage, community and family, resonating deeply with audiences across generations. Her most requested poem is "Is That You, Mama??"

She has published over 20 books, the most recent is her biography in short vignette stories – *Everyone Hears the Drums, Daydreamers See the Drummer.*

In addition to her purely artistic contributions, Maggi wrote commemorative poems for significant events such as the Tennessee Bicentennial ("Who We Are"), four gubernatorial inaugurations and the United States Air Force 50th Anniversary. She wrote the Tennessee Quarter poem, Tennessee Women's Suffrage poem, the Grand Ole Opry 100th Anniversary poem and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College 100th Anniversary poem. The Bicentennial poem "Who We Are" hangs in the Tennessee State capital and many government offices. It is designated the official Tennessee State poem. The United States Air Force 50th Anniversary poem was read into the congressional record.

She is the first recipient of the Mark Twain Fellowship from Elmira College and the 2003 Outstanding Tennessean Award. In 2007 she was recognized as the Literary Arts Medalist by the Germantown Arts Alliance for achieving a notable and distinguished career in the Mid South.

She was inducted into the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Hall of Fame.

Her humor, warmth and authenticity earned her love and admiration from all walks of life.

Throughout her career, Maggi championed poetry's ability to connect people often stating, "When I hear them laughing and crying, I know I've done my job."

Maggi joined the unique and quirky arts community of Bell Buckle, Tennessee in 1982 where she became an integral part of the community, and was known for her mentorship and open door policy for visitors and poets alike to just "visit."

Her voice will live on through her timeless works and the inspiration she provided to countless writers and readers. Friend Andi Landis summed her up as "a big robust, heart full of friends, music, laughter and tears."

Maggi lived surrounded, if not buried, by her treasures of collections – and many unique custom art pieces inspired by her imagination, from the likes of Vannoy Streeter, Walter Anderson and Herb Williams. Her life was a testament to overcoming adversity; she survived both kidney and breast cancer.

She will be remembered as a true treasure of Tennessee and an enduring figure in American literature. We can all smile when we hear her voice now in our hearts saying, "Ya'll come see me, ya hear."

A Southern storytelling "visit" / celebration of life and chocolate will be held in Bell Buckle.

Public visitation: Wednesday, July 8, 2026 4pm – 8pm Bethany Hall, 29 Railroad Square, Bell Buckle, TN

Family and close friends visitation: Thursday, July 9, 2026 10:30-11:30am Bell Buckle Banquet Hall, 27 Railroad Square, Bell Buckle, TN

Funeral Service and Celebration: Thursday, July 9, 2026 11:30am Bell Buckle Banquet Hall, 27 Railroad Square, Bell Buckle, TN. Festive attire. Covered Dish / Pot Luck – no desserts

In lieu of flowers, please support the next homeless person you encounter.

Feldhaus-Gowen-Smith Chapel is honored to be serving the family of Margaret Britton Vaughn.

# Cemetery Details

## Evergreen Cemetery

519 Greenland Drive  
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

# Upcoming Events

## Visitation

JUL 8. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Bethany Hall  
29 Railroad Square  
Bell Buckle, TN 37130

## Private Visitation

JUL 9. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Bell Buckle Banquet Hall  
29 Railroad Square  
Bell Buckle, TN 37130

## Celebration of Life Funeral Service and Story Telling

JUL 9. 11:30 AM (CT)

Bell Buckle Banquet Hall  
27 Railroad Square  
Bell Buckle, TN 37130



# Tribute Wall



“ Maggi was 1month older than me and our shared encounters included book signings, art shows, visits, Drs. offices etc. never a dull moment. She became a part of your heart on the first meeting.  
❤️

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**Wanda Gobbell** - 1 hour ago



“ About 5 years ago my sister and i went to Bellbuckle for a sister trip. We were told about her living in that town and she was really neat to meet! We were able to arrange to meet her at her house and she told us so many stories about musician celebrities she had met and told us about some of her unique items in her house. Before we left she signed 2 of her books for us. Lovely lady! Glad i met her and have this memory! Shelley Moore

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**Shelley Moore** - 1 hour ago