



**G**ay St. Clair Blackford died October 8, 2008 due to complications from a lifetime of multiple sclerosis.

She was born February 24, 1942 in Wilmington, North Carolina to James Baylor Blackford, an officer in the U.S. Navy who wanted her named Pearl Harbor. Her mother, Lillian (St. Clair) Blackford insisted on family names. Gay spent her childhood in Virginia where her ancestors had lived since its beginnings. She was a proud descendant of Pocahontas. At the age of 12 she and her younger sister Anne moved to the San Francisco Bay Area. After high school Gay attended Mills College transferring to the University of California – San Francisco, Medical School to enter its nursing program. She developed M.S. while there, earning her RN and MS degrees in a wheelchair. She worked for a while as a psychiatric nurse, then began teaching in UCSF's Continuing Education program classes in contemporary youth culture to clergy and social workers. Gay was vitally interested in the cultural changes in San Francisco brought about by the '60s, especially where it intersected with health care such as free clinics and mental health. She became very active in disabled rights and accessibility issues. Her handprints are in the cement of the first wheelchair accessible curbs at UCSF Medical School.

Always adventurous, she rode around San Francisco in its wheelchair accessible buses. There she met the love of her life, Jerry Torczyner, also with MS. They were active in disability issues with Gay serving as a disability advisor to several California politicians. She played a roll in the creation of the South Yuba Independence Trail. Gay and Jerry lived in San Mateo until health problems forced her into a nursing home. Even then, they remained active, riding Bay Area Rapid Transit trains, attending rock concerts, school reunions, disability events where she won 1st place in the 1981 Angel Island wheelchair sprint, as well as car events in Jerry's vintage Thunderbird station wagon. A highlight was being named King and Queen of Santa Cruz's Beach Street Car Revival.

After Jerry's tragic death from melanoma in 2001 Gay moved to Bozeman to be near her sister. While living in Gallatin County Rest Home she was a voracious listener to books on tape and watcher of the History Channel. She was especially interested in history and anything to do with the Roosevelts, the Kennedys, Martin Luther King and all of the times she had lived through.

Gay is survived by her sister Anne Garner, of Bozeman; her step-sister Susan Blackford Hankins, husband Rick and son Richard; step-brother Jimmy Blackford; step-mother Sue Moffett, all of Richmond, Virginia; her nephew Carson Garner, wife Shawna and daughter Morgan, of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. A "Remembering Gay" memorial will be held at Gallatin Rest Home.