



Obituary

Born: Wednesday, March 27, 1929

Died: Thursday, May 2, 2019

Charlotte Johnson Read, 90, who spent the greater part of her life in and among her beloved Indiana Dunes, passed away on Thursday, May 2, 2019.

Charlotte was born March 27, 1929, the only child of Charles and Tekla Johnson, who were immigrants from Sweden.

She grew up near Jackson Park in Chicago, believing that everyone should live near parks. Her father owned a thriving construction business until the October 1929 stock market crash, when he lost everything. He died when Charlotte was sixteen years old. Her mother supported the family by working as a beautician. Charlotte attended South Shore High School and graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in Economics.

Service Summary

Memorial Service

11:30 AM Mon May 06, 2019

St. John United Church

225 W. Lincoln
Chesterton, IN 46304

She married Herbert Philo Read in 1952, thus beginning their life partnership as passionate and committed protectors of the natural environment. She and Herbert were founding members of the Porter County Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America. They were longtime active members of the Save the Dunes Council. Charlotte and Herbert Read gathered citizen petitions and testified before Congress in a successful effort to establish the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in 1966 and subsequently to expand and safeguard the park.

Charlotte possessed a natural gift for diplomacy, and a capacity to sense another person's character and values and to understand where it was possible to find common ground. Through the years, she worked with elected officials, corporate executives, environmentalists, labor and the public as one of Indiana's leading environmental voices. U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky has said: "Her involvement with numerous committees illustrates her well-rounded interests in Indiana's environmental heritage and her commitment to preserve the quality of the air, water and wildlife for all the citizens of Northwest Indiana and the nation."

She became the Save the Dunes Council's first employee in 1974, and served as its executive director until 1992. She was the first executive director of the Shirley Heinze Environmental Fund, which acquired lands for preservation. She was active in the Izaak Walton League of America at the local, state, and national level. She was a founding member of the Hoosier Environmental Council. She served on numerous boards and task forces, including the Porter County Park Board, the Indiana Heritage Trust Fund, the Grand Calumet Task Force, the steering committee for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Iron and Steel Initiative,

the Isaak Walton League Great Lakes Committee, and more. During the 1970s she worked as an editor for a scientific magazine, *Oceanography International*.

She won numerous awards, including Indiana's highest citizen award, the Sagamore of the Wabash, in 2003; the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Hoosier Environmental Council in 1990; the Gold Cup Award from the Hoosier Sierra Club in 1991; as well as industry-sponsored awards. She was named to the Indiana Conservation Hall of Fame in 2010 and to the Izaak Walton League of America's Conservation Hall of Fame in 2014, a coveted national honor for outstanding environmental work.

Charlotte and Herbert raised their five children at a house on State Park Boundary Road that later became part of the National Lakeshore. They then moved to a house Herb designed for his parents. The Read Dunes House in Tremont, 1,000 feet inside the southern boundary of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, became a part of the National Register of Historic Places in 2011.

Her soul shone with love for her family, for the natural world, and for the men and women whose lives she touched. Family members remember her as a wonderful cook, including her trademark Swedish pancakes. She loved hiking in the Dunes, reading murder mysteries, listening to Puccini operas, and visiting with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Stephen Higgs's book *Eternal Vigilance* quotes Charlotte's description of her own life as a preservationist. "You get hooked on the little victories, and the little defeats, and then pretty soon you find, at least in our case, that it becomes the central part of your life. There's no finite point when you say, 'It's over, I can rest.' Eternal vigilance is the price of preserving your good idea."

She was preceded in death by her son William Philo Read.

She is survived by Herbert Read, her husband and life partner in Dunes preservation efforts, and by sons John (and Sherrill), Jim (and Pia), David (and Karen), and daughter Suzy Hodge (and Brian); by her grandchildren Jacquelyne, Jonathon, Samantha, Allison, David, James, Jordana, Jessica, and Jennifer, and great-grandchildren Blake, Hunter, Katelyn, Krystal, Peyton, Jaxon, Ella, Colton, Cooper, and Dawson.

A memorial service will be held 11:30 a.m., Monday, May 6, at St. John's United Church, 225 W. Lincoln Ave., Chesterton. Reception with family will be 10:30 a.m. and a luncheon will follow the service. An additional Celebration of Life gathering will be arranged for a later date.

Arrangements are under the care of White-Love Funeral

Home, Chesterton, IN.