



Mrs. Mary Beatrice Wilson Byrd

April 5, 1928 - May 2, 2015

Mary Beatrice Wilson Byrd also affectionately known as “Mama Byrd” was born on April 5, 1928 in Oxford, North Carolina and entered into eternal rest on May 2, 2015. Mary was the youngest of five, and was preceded in death by her parents, Edward Wilson and Naomi Watkins Wilson, and her four siblings; Booker T. Wilson, Ruth Johnson, James E Wilson, and Naomi Roberts.

Ms. Byrd was extremely bright and graduated from High School at the age of fifteen. She earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Education from Fayetteville State University and in later years received a Masters’ Degree from North Carolina Central University. She loved learning, teaching and sharing her knowledge with others. Her teaching career began in Burke County in 1947 and ended with her retirement from Durham Public Schools in 1986 with over 30 years of service. She was beloved by her students, principals and colleagues. Former students often approached her asking, “Ms. Byrd, Do you remember me? You were one of my favorite teachers.” To which she would reply, “Yes, and what are you doing now?” She enjoyed listening to stories about their families and careers and offered encouraging words when she felt it was needed.

Ms. Mary loved to travel. By plane, train, car or bus; she had no preference. The question of the summer was always the same, “Where is Ms. Byrd going this year?” She was ecstatic about each excursion and would often say, “Never Wait, Tomorrow is not promised, Go while you can!” In her lifetime, she visited many of the 50 states and also traveled to Canada, Italy, Switzerland and France.

Mary participated in numerous civic organizations. However Call for Action and the Model Mothers Club were most dear. As a volunteer with Call for Action, she enjoyed assisting the citizens of Durham with their concerns. She was excited when the organization secured favorable outcomes for their clients. Winning and closing a case, gave her a great sense of satisfaction. She believed in making a positive difference in the lives of others. Being a positive influence is why she became a member of the Model Mothers Club. Their goals and objectives were to provide guidance on youth development and hold discussions on social and community issues. Monthly meetings were held at the member's homes and Ms. Mary waited eagerly for her turn to host. She loved entertaining and bonding with friends. She looked forward with anticipation to cooking the meal, pulling out the "good china" and inviting everyone to her place. The baked chicken and marinated carrots were a club favorite and for many a continuous hit!

Sister Byrd accepted the call to discipleship at an early age. She joined West Durham Baptist Church in the 80's and faithfully served God wherever she was needed. Some areas of service included: Senior and Chancellor Choirs, Church Clerk, Day Care Director, Missionary Department, Trustee Board and the Finance Committee. She was also a member of the Martha E. Graham Sunday School Class.

Ms. Mary was united in matrimony to the late Reverend James Byrd for more than 38 years. She was a devoted, wife, mother, grandmother, great grandmother, aunt, great aunt and friend. Those left to celebrate her life and memory include: three daughters, Anne Jones of Washington, DC; Naomi Pratt of Durham, NC; Audrey McKinnon (James) of Durham, NC; one son, James Maurice Byrd of Durham, NC; five grandchildren, Vanessa Washington of Washington, DC, Charles Jones, Jr of Phoenix, Arizona, Jacques Byrd of Chapel Hill, NC, Tiffany Jones (Brandon) of Cary, NC, Nicole Byrd of Durham, NC, several great grandchildren, nieces, nephews and a host of other relatives and friends. Marian Starnes, Thomas Kincy, Rev. Andre Harper and Hilton Barr were her adopted children.

Ms. Byrd loved helping and encouraging others. She was willing to assist in any capacity as needed. If you asked Mary W. Byrd today, how she would want to be remembered, she would simply say,
“May the work I’ve done, Speak for Me.”

Cemetery Details

Brier Creek Memorial Gardens

7600 ACC Boulevard
Durham, NC 27617
<http://www.landquestlegacy.com/cemeteries/briercreek/index.html>

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 7. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

West Durham Baptist Church
1901 Athens Street
Durham, NC 27707
<http://www.westdurhambaptist.org/>

Service

MAY 7. 1:00 PM (ET)

West Durham Baptist Church
1901 Athens Street
Durham, NC 27707
<http://www.westdurhambaptist.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Mary Beatrice Wilson Byrd*

October 05, 2023 at 11:31 AM



“ *I am so very sorry to hear about the passing of Mary. I am sure that all those who knew her miss her greatly. Her kindness, generosity and joy of life are qualities that are priceless. Although we are no longer able to see her smiling face, the beautiful memories will remain irreplaceable and unerasable. Please know that you are in my thoughts and I pray that with the passing of time your pain will lessen. Never forget the loving compassion of our heavenly father who daily carries the loads for us. He not only knows but understands our pain. Isaiah63:9 He invites us to throw our burdens upon him and he promises to sustain us! Psalms55:22 Once again I am sorry for your loss!*

JOY - May 29, 2015 at 12:58 PM



“ *Sorry to hear about the passing of your loved one. May the comforting promises from God ease your pain during this difficult time. One of which is found at Isaiah 25:8. There it says "He will swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will wipe away the tears from all faces."*

Again, please accept my sincere condolences for your loss.

S. Hill - May 08, 2015 at 09:48 AM