



Merdith Marie Byram

February 20, 1941 - November 11, 2019

Merdith (Mert) McFerrin Byram, age 78, ascended to her heavenly home on Monday, November 11, 2019. Born February 20, 1941, Mert was a long time resident of Bessemer/McCalla, Al. She was raised in Concord, Alabama, an only child to the late Merl and Audette McFerrin. A graduate of Hueytown High School, she continued her education earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Montevallo and a masters degree and PhD from the University of Alabama. After graduation, she worked her way from Science Teacher to Counselor; to Principal of West Hills Elementary School; and on to Director of Pupil Personnel for Bessemer City Schools, the position from which she retired. She was recently described by one of her past student's parent as a beloved principal who truly cared for her students and celebrated their accomplishments.

In addition to her work career accomplishments, Mert was a community leader with "dedicated service to the community, irrefutably successful leadership, impeccable integrity, strength of character and formidable use of personality" (according to the Jefferson County Historical Commission when awarding her the Thomas Jefferson Award for excellence in historical leadership). Some of Mert's many leadership positions and past accomplishments include: first female President of the Bessemer Kiwanis Club; Kiwanian of The Year; President of Bessemer Main Street; President and later advisor to the Bessemer Hall of History; board member of the West Jefferson County Historical Society; Chairman of the Jefferson County Historical Commission

and recipient of the Thomas Jefferson Award for her meticulous eye for historic significance and preservation efforts; board member and President of the West Jefferson Technical Education Endowment and Trust Foundation; board member of the Salvation Army; board member and secretary of the YMCA, board member of the Bessemer Area Chamber of Commerce and recipient of the prestigious Charles A. Long Outstanding Civic Award. Mert once described herself as “a professional street walker who is not paid a dime,” in jokingly referring to her work for Bessemer Main Street and some of her many community fund raising efforts.

In 1987, at the request of civic leaders in Bessemer, she served as Chairman of the year-long Centennial Celebration for the City, which included overseeing the work of sixty working committees and numerous events.

During that same year she completed her doctoral dissertation and orals while holding down her job as a school principal. An amazing accomplishment.

For many years, Mert was also a mainstay in the First Presbyterian Church of Bessemer, serving as the Clerk of Session, an Elder, working with the Presbyterian Women’s organization and as the church historian. In 2008 she served as a Commissioner representing the Presbytery of Shepherds and Lapsley at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. A current member of Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church, Mert played a key roll in the building and establishment of the church.

Mert is survived by her loving husband, Jim Byram; daughter Daye Butler (Ryan); her in-laws who quickly adopted their only child sister-in-law as one of their own: Bob Byram (Judy) of Pelham; Pam Nichols (John) of North Shelby County; Bill Byram (Rita) of Pinson. Additional survivors include special cousins Vera Higgins; Tommy & Donny Stephens; Susan Hubbard; and Linda Grubbs; as well as nieces and nephews; and a host of dear friends.

In the final days of her earthly life, in addition to the loving care of her family and friends, the family expresses appreciation to the compassionate health care professionals who assisted with her care including care givers Beth Hosmer, Grace Northcutt, and Camilla Pate.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to the Presbyterian Children's Home (phfc.org) or the Salvation Army (salvationarmyusa.org).

Visitation will be held on Thursday, November 14 from 5 to 8 pm at McCalla Memorial Funeral Home with a funeral service on Friday, November 15, 11 am at Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church and burial following at Cedar Hill Cemetery. McCalla Memorial Funeral Home directing.

Cemetery Details

Cedar Hill Cemetery

650 Circle Heights Circle
Bessemer, AL 35020

Previous Events

Funeral Service

NOV 15. 11:00 AM (CT)

Shepherd of the Valley Presbyterian Church
5081 Eastern Valley Road
Mc Calla, AL 35111

Tribute Wall

BL

“ Mert and I started our teaching careers at about the same time. She stayed with it, ai didn't, but have enjoyed my association with her through the years. We have lost a giant. Bonnie Lipscomb

Bonnie Lipscomb - November 14, 2019 at 10:53 PM



“ 57 files added to the album Life Tributes



McCalla Memorial Funeral Home - Traditions - November 14, 2019 at 09:20 AM

KM

Mert was a dear part of my life when making the transition to Bessemer and her warmth, wit and charm drew me in...I will deeply miss her...she will always inspire me to be a better person and am grateful for having the opportunity to be part of her life . Thank you Mert for shining and sharing your light! Sincerely, Kat

Kathy Morris - November 15, 2019 at 12:15 AM

AS

“ On behalf of the City of Auburn Community Services Department we send our sincere condolences to the family.

Ashley Simpson - November 13, 2019 at 05:20 PM



“ *Divine Light was purchased for the family of Merdith Marie Byram.*



November 13, 2019 at 04:51 PM



“ *I graduated from high school with Merdith many years ago. She was sweet, smart and funny! I haven't seen her in a long time but I know her family and friends will miss her. I will be praying for you in the days ahead.*

*Kay Justice
Class of '59
Hueytown High School*

Kay D Justice - November 12, 2019 at 07:54 PM



“ *I am truly sorry to get this news. Mert fought so long and hard to beat this terrible disease. She did for a long time, she never gave up.*

Jim and family, of all her accomplishments in the City of Bessemer you were the highlight of her life. My deepest sympathy goes out to all of you.

*We grew up and graduated school together, and all the things she accomplished, you can see she was the smart one. I am so glad you got to travel to so many wonderful places and I enjoyed following you to each one. I will miss my dear friend. Love to you all.
Ann Quinn*

ann quinn - November 12, 2019 at 02:39 PM