



Mary Shell

September 18, 1914 - October 6, 2008

Mary Johnson Shell was born on September 18, 1914, the eldest child of Nancy Bowers Johnson and Rhodes Hall Johnson. One of five children, “Miss” Mary and her siblings, Leroy H. Johnson, Ruth Johnson Witcher, Nancy Johnson Nations, and Rachel Johnson Edwards, grew up on the Johnson family farm outside of Turin, Georgia. She was a member of Turin Baptist Church and was baptized there in 1926. “Miss” Mary graduated from Starr High School in 1932 and attended Erskine College in Due West, South Carolina. She also attended Oglethorpe University and West Georgia College, obtaining Bachelor of Arts and Masters degrees in Education.

“Miss” Mary married Robert Henry Shell, also of Turin, Georgia, on August 16, 1935. After they married, they moved to Newnan, where they joined First Baptist Church. In 1940, the two purchased a lot on the then-unfinished Elm Street next to Veola and Julian McDonald. At the time, the street was simply pasture on a dirt road, and the neighbors chose their own street numbers. Mr. and Mrs. Shell completed their house at 35 Elm Street by 1941, and there they raised their two children, Martha Nan Shell Van Patten and Rhodes Henry Shell. After her husband’s death, “Miss” Mary continued to live in the Elm Street house until she died.

When she returned to Coweta after two years at Erskine College, “Miss” Mary began teaching, which she continued in various forms for over eighty years. Though she taught elementary age children for the majority of her career, she also taught sixth and seventh graders. She began at East Newnan and also

taught in Rico, Charles E. Riley, and Palmetto. Retiring from a permanent position in the early 1980s, “Miss” Mary continued to substitute teach until the mid 1990s. Throughout her lifetime, she also tutored children of all ages, many of them from elementary school through college. Even after she stopped tutoring children, she often read to preschoolers at First Baptist Church Daycare, First Baptist Church Preschool, Elm Street Elementary, and Jefferson Parkway Elementary, among others. She fervently supported all aspects of education, helping to found Coweta County’s chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, a sorority that supported local women educators, in 1957. As one of the fourteen founding members, “Miss” Mary contributed to the sorority for the rest of her life, even participating in the fiftieth anniversary celebration held last year.

In addition to her career as a teacher, “Miss” Mary was very involved in the Newnan community. As a member of First Baptist Church, she held various positions during her seventy-plus years there. For a number of years, “Miss” Mary served as Sunday School Director, and after retiring, became the Sunday School Director Emeritus. Within the church, “Miss” Mary promoted the educational ministry and participated in the choir for a number of years. She also served on the Board of Directors for the Newnan-Coweta YMCA when it opened in 1962. “Miss” Mary was well known for her beautiful yard, home to a dogwood tree that she decorated with Easter eggs each year. Additionally, she had hydrangeas, jonquils, sweetheart roses, nandinas, and azaleas and continued to work in her yard up until the last few years of her life. She also enjoyed painting china and playing bridge each week.

Above everything else, “Miss” Mary loved her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. She became an avid football fan after both of her children attended Auburn University and kept up with Auburn games and Braves games for the rest of her life. “Miss” Mary is survived by her brother, Leroy H. Johnson (and his wife, Ella Hill) of Turin, Georgia; children, Nan Shell Van Patten (and her husband, Rodney Van Patten) and Rhodes Shell, all of Newnan, Georgia; grandchildren, Seay Van Patten Poulakos (and her

husband, Jim Poulakos) of Newnan, Vee Van Patten of Ponte Vedra, Florida, Blake Shell of Portland, Oregon, and Mary Katherine Shell of Athens, Georgia; and two great-grandchildren. She is also survived by twelve nieces and nephews and many great nieces and nephews. Her husband, Robert H. Shell, preceded her in death.

Condolences may be expressed online at www.mckoon.com

The family will receive friends on Tuesday, October 7, 2008 from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at McKoon Funeral Home, 38 Jackson Street, Newnan. Funeral services will be Wednesday, October 8, 2008 at 4:00 PM at First Baptist Church.

Rather than flowers, the family respectfully requests contributions to the First Baptist Church P.O. Box 738, Newnan, GA 30264.

McKoon Funeral Home 770-253-4580

Cemetery Details

Oak Hill Cemetery

96 Jefferson Street
Newnan, GA 30263
(770) 253-3744

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 7. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

McKoon Funeral Home
38 Jackson Street
Newnan, GA 30263
(770) 253-4580
care@mckoon.com

Service

OCT 8. 4:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church of Newnan
15 West Washington Street
Newnan, GA 30264
(770) 253-0797
info@fbcnewnan.org
<http://www.fbcnewnan.org>

Tribute Wall

BS

“ You are in our thoughts and prayers. Ms. Mary was a dear lady and inspiration to all who came in contact with her. We always enjoyed seeing her smiling face at church (FBC) and loved talking to her about Auburn University. She will be sadly missed. With deepest sympathy, Bob, Valorie, and Lindsey Stitt

bob and valorie stitt - October 13, 2008 at 06:25 PM

NB

“ I was saddened to read of the death of Mrs. Shell. I was one of her many students at Palmetto Elementary School. She was a wonderful person and Teacher. I thank God that our paths crossed. Natalie Beavers-McFadden City Council Member Palmetto, GA.

Natalie Beavers-McFadden - October 08, 2008 at 08:56 PM

MC

“ Rhones, Nan, Blake and Katherine, Miss Mary has ment so much to me for all of my life. I loved her as a Sunday School and Bible School teacher during my childhood. As a young person, I respected her for the example that she set, and for the kindness and love that she showed to all. When I was working at Elm Street and my mother had cancer, I had to leave many times on short notice and I knew that I could always count on Miss Mary to walk across the street and finish the day for me and keep my class in line until I got back. One day she and I went to Auburn to talk to a class about education as a career choice. We had a great time and I think the students really enjoyed viewpoints from both ends of the career ladder. I am fortunate to have had her as a friend. You are even more fortunate to have had her as a mother. I know that you will miss her, but heaven is a better place for having her there.

Marie Comte - October 08, 2008 at 02:47 PM

FS

“ A "ROCK" in 1st Baptist's foundation, and an prominent memory from my childhood ...she will be missed!

Frank Stripling - October 08, 2008 at 01:44 PM

NR

“ When we joined First Baptist Newnan in 1984, Miss Mary and Jerry Walker met us in the aisle after church and this Sunday School Director said she had a job for us. For the next 10 years we taught singles and for 12 years after that (until we moved west) we taught a couples Sunday School Class. During that time, Miss Mary became a close friend, a great help with teaching resources, and a wonderful encourager. When Sue opened Jefferson Parkway Elementary School, Miss Mary hand painted and signed a ceramic pencil and paper clip holder which Sue has kept on every desk since. Sue still has it on her desk today, and it is her reminder of great memories of a wonderful lady. Even when she was in her 80s, Miss Mary substituted on many occasions in Jefferson Parkway, and many times, even when she was not substituting, she would come and read to the children. Miss Mary was a great encourager to this new principal, and a lot the success of this "School of Excellence" may be traced to Miss Mary. Newnan, Coweta County, First Baptist Church, and the rest of us lost a great, giving, caring, saint this week. Our hearts go out to Nan and Rhodes and others and we hurt with you, but Miss Mary will live on in our memories, and we are better people for having been touched and ministered to by Miss Mary Shell.

Nick & Sue Rickenbaker - October 08, 2008 at 11:06 AM

LL

“ I first meet Mary Shell at Palmetto Elementary in 1974. In 1975 when we moved to Newnan, she was the first person to come over with a house warming gift and to welcome us to Newnan. Our paths crossed over the years and she was always very gracious and friendly.

Larry Long - October 08, 2008 at 09:39 AM

SD

“ We were so sorry to hear of Mrs. Shell's passing yesterday. She was a delight to have in rehab at "Beaulie". We loved her and she was a real gem to work with. Our heartfelt sympathy, Sarah, Christine, and Ange

Sarah Dixon - October 07, 2008 at 07:27 PM

KF

“ May your loss be comforted by her memory that will be held dear to so many people. She may have never have known how much she meant to the children at First Baptist Daycare as she would volunteer her time to read stories to the children. They all enjoyed it when "Miss Mary" would come in to read to them. Deepest Sympathy, The Flowers Family

Kristy Flowers - October 07, 2008 at 03:34 PM

MP

“ I grew up in the First Baptist Church in Newnan and my grandparents Carey and Clara Denney were friends with Miss Mary. She was my Sunday School Teacher when I was in the fifth grade and always made everyone feel welcome in her class. I was also a student of Miss Alberta Keheley's China painting Studio and when I started painting in 1980 Miss Mary was in the class. I was able to see her each week at class and enjoy her company until Miss Alberta died in 1997. We then started painting china at Wesley Woods and I was still able to see Miss Mary and enjoy her fellowship as we painted together. She is a great Lady and I will miss her very much. She always had a story to tell and has been a great influence on my life. She is kind and gracious and always made those around her feel loved. Her life was a shining example of Christian character and it was very evident that she was a Child of the King. I look forward to the day when I can see her again. My sympathy to her family and friends. Praise God from Whom all Blessings Flow. Mark S. Puckett

Mark S. Puckett - October 07, 2008 at 01:39 PM

KC

“ Miss Mary was my 5th grade Sunday School teacher. I still cannot hear "I Love to Tell the Story" without thinking of Miss Mary. She was so sweet to a rowdy bunch of 5th graders and had such a positive influence on my life. With deepest sympathy, Karen Majors Craft

Karen Majors Craft - October 06, 2008 at 11:26 PM