



Betty Lucille Riley

October 26, 1930 - April 29, 2026

BETTY LUCILLE RILEY

Betty Lucille Riley, age 95 of Laurel, passed away April 29, 2026. She was born October 26, 1930 to Edgar and Lucille Riley. She graduated from Laurel High School, where she played basketball. Betty then attended Mississippi Southern College where she received an English degree, and later returned to the then University of Southern Mississippi to earn a library arts certification.

Betty was an educator, teaching forty years in public school in the Jones County and Laurel School Districts. When she retired, she was soon called back to teach the Advanced Placement English classes. Her skills as a teacher were called on often, as she taught numerous Sunday school classes and lead many, many studies as a member of the United Methodist Women, first at Kingston Methodist Church and later at Laurel First Methodist.

Betty loved to travel with friends, and was a voracious reader until her vision problems caused her to give up that passion. She then turned to watching sports on television, especially Braves baseball, Southern Miss anything, and lots of basketball. She was a loving, generous person. She loved art and music. Betty loved family, especially her nieces and nephews, and delighted in keeping up with what they were doing, from a good discussion of history and politics to their exploits in sports, dance, theater, art, and crossword puzzles.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Edgar and Lucille Riley; her sisters, Dorothy Jean Riley, Katherine Patrick, and Carolyn Brent; nephew, Ricky Brent; and special friend, Amorita "Doodle" Gordon.

She is survived by her niece, Cecelia Luter (Jay); nephews, Don Patrick (Irene), Ron Brent (Lena), and Bob Brent (Lynn); great-nieces and nephews, Julie Nosser (Jay), Chris Luter (Rebecca), Scott Luter (Laura), Matthew Luter, Alan Brent, Alex Brent, and Preston Brent; and great-great-nieces and nephews, Emily Luter, Nicholas Luter, Elizabeth Luter, Brady Nosser, Andrew Nosser, Elliot Gellin-Luter, and Natalie Gellin-Luter.

We would like to thank her caregivers, Dorothy Shows, Kellie Powell, Michele McGreevey, Dekala Davis, and Cassandra Gant, who lovingly took care of her, argued with her (usually losing), and thoroughly spoiled her.

Her service will be held on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at First Methodist Church of Laurel. Visitation will be held from 1 PM to 2 PM with a service starting at 2 PM. She will be laid to rest in Lake Park Cemetery, and Dr. Daniel Hathorne will officiate.

To view and sign the online guestbook, please visit www.memorychapellaurel.com

Cemetery Details

Lake Park Cemetery

1303 Old Bay Springs Rd
Laurel, MS 39440

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 2. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Laurel First Methodist Church
420 North 5th Avenue
Laurel, MS 39440

Funeral Service

MAY 2. 2:00 PM (CT)

Laurel First Methodist Church
420 North 5th Avenue
Laurel, MS 39440

Tribute Wall

SC

“ I knew Betty Riley as a fellow member of Methodist Women and as a teacher of the Wesley Fellowship Class at Laurel First Methodist Church. Her lessons were always very interesting ,well researched to include background information and correct pronunciations of Biblical characters and locations, and typed. When I gave occasional lessons she often made comments which further impressed me with her Biblical knowledge. The image of God as a mother eagle protecting us with her wings was one topic which we discussed . Deuteronomy 32:11-12 and Psalm 91. Betty made me feel like an old friend and like my opinion mattered. Conversations were always interesting and she was truly young at heart. I first met her while waiting at a church youth fundraiser carwash in which her great nephew Matthew and my son Russell were participating at the corner of 10th Street and 16th Avenue. She was always there in the Fellowship Hall with her sister Katherine Patrick and niece Cecelia helping with the Election Day frozen food and bake sale. I would be welcomed by them when I left work to catch the tail end of the event. She took good care of her special friend Amorita in Amorita’s declining days.

Susan Cannon - May 04 at 04:18 PM

KK

“ Condolences to her family and friends. She was one of my favorite teachers in High School. I am an English Teacher today because of her influence. She was a very giving person with a sense of humor.

Kathryn Vick Kelton - May 01 at 11:58 AM

JK

“ *Such a wonderful educator. Will always remember her from my school days. My heartfelt condolences to her family and friends.*
Janis Jackson Kinard

Jan Kinard - May 01 at 08:57 AM

BB

“ *Ms Riley was my AP English teacher at RH Watkins High School. She was absolutely one of the best teachers I ever had. She inspired me to love literature and prepared me to tackle all the writing tasks that college required. She expected no less than your best, but inspired you to do exactly that. She was definitely the teacher that left a positive and lasting impression on me. Condolences to her family.*
Beth Allen Bergin

Beth Allen Bergin - May 01 at 12:35 AM

MD

“ *I had Ms. Riley for college prep English my senior year. I received an athletic scholarship to attend LSU but she pushed me academically and set high expectations of me in her class as well as several other teachers at LHS. She told me " your athletic talent will sustain you for a while but the academic opportunity you have been given will last you a lifetime" and she was right. Thank you Ms. Riley for pushing me.*

Mike Dewitt - April 30 at 09:16 PM

SB

“ I taught English with Betty at Laurel High School (R. H. Watkins at the time) for several years. She was a wonderful mentor who guided me in my first year teaching senior English. I also learned that “Sergeant Riley” was in charge of her classroom: fights didn’t break out in that room! Betty was comfortable expressing her opinions on everything, and she usually was right. Most importantly, I will remember Betty as a friend. She rescued me once in an emergency by babysitting my two boys. And she hosted a luncheon at her house for me when George and I were leaving to teach a year in England. I will miss her.

Susan Early Blackledge - April 30 at 06:55 PM