



## Mary Ball Lyon

March 20, 1931 - April 17, 2024

Mary Ball Lyon, 93, of the Shady Grove Community in Laurel, Mississippi, passed away on April 17, 2024, at The Orchard Retirement Community in Ridgeland, MS. Born on the last day of winter, March 20, 1931, Mrs. Lyon was the fifth child and fourth surviving child of John Ollin Ball and Emma Smith Ball of Louin, Jasper County, Mississippi. Except for her early childhood in Jasper County, a period in college, a year in the Mississippi Delta, and some time living in Ocean Springs, MS, Mrs. Lyon resided in Jones County. Growing up on large, working farms in Jasper and Jones County, Mrs. Lyon retained lifelong pride in her agricultural roots, as well as her early job caring for much younger siblings, her father's teaching career, her mother's work ethic, and her closely-knit Ball and Smith families.

On May 29, 1953, what she always called "the hottest day of the year and before the church had air conditioning," Mrs. Lyon married her high school and college sweetheart Donnis C. Lyon of Jones County at Shady Grove Baptist Church. They remained married until Mr. Lyon's passing in 2013, one month shy of their 60th anniversary. A well-known and beloved elementary school teacher, Mrs. Lyon graduated from Shady Grove High School and earned degrees in nutrition and education from the University of Southern Mississippi after completing an A.A. degree at Jones Jr. College. At Jones, Mary worked in the library while her future husband lettered in track and field.

Early on, Mrs. Lyon worked as a dietician at a local hospital. Then, during a teaching career that encompassed twenty years of service to the State of Mississippi, Mrs. Lyon taught at rural Jones County's once-upon-a-time Sweetwater School, where she instructed all the elementary school children while Mr. Lyon taught all the upper grades. The Lyons owned one of the few televisions in the community and often welcomed many of the local children over to watch. Mrs. Lyon subsequently taught at Central and Prentiss Schools in Laurel. After some years off with her young sons, Mary returned to work with preschoolers at Highland Baptist Kindergarten and then to instruct third grade at Shady Grove Elementary from the late 1970s until her retirement in 1993.

Widely admired as an inspiring, devoted, and deeply caring teacher, Mrs. Lyon dependably furnished students with a nurturing, rewarding educational experience. She loved every one of them, and deployed myriad ways of making learning fun for her pupils—like her famously competitive spelling bees and multiplication 'baseball' games—but she staunchly believed in her classes mastering all the knowledge they needed to flourish as they journeyed forward. Somehow, Mrs. Lyon remembered all her students, even years afterward. She so inspired them that her sons well remember answering the home phone some evenings to speak with eager learners desperately wanting Mrs. Lyon to know they were doing extra math problems or supplemental studying.

Mrs. Lyon took pleasure in volunteering for many years in Highland Baptist Church's Sunday nursery school while a member there. Another of her favorite activities involved the family's massive strawberry patch and her dozens of blueberry bushes. She enjoyed nothing more than picking gallons and gallons of berries, making preserves and pies, PLUS distributing the berries generously around the community. In later years, Mrs. Lyon became an enthusiastic fan of Sandra Bullock, possessed and frequently watched all

her movies, (and generally just called her Sandra, which you were supposed to know meant Sandra Bullock.)

Mrs. Lyon boundlessly adored her in-law family of Lyons, Powells, Lowes, Valentines, and Murrays, just like her own family of Balls, Smiths, Ishees, and Longs. Her siblings--nine counting little Ruby Doris who died of rheumatic fever at two before Mrs. Lyon was born, and a niece who became a step-sister--meant the world to her and she was so proud of all their many accomplishments in the fields of education, business, and engineering. Several family members moved away but could always come back for delicious food and genuine hospitality with Mrs. Lyon. She doted on her MANY nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews with endless joy, happily teaching several of them in third grade.

Mrs. Lyon loved and always took amazing care of her three boys, a virtuoso musician, a historian, and a biologist, all teachers as well. She was one of the warmest, kindest, friendliest, and most charming people most folks ever met and unfailingly supportive of everyone endeavoring to do good. Over the years, Mrs. Lyon curated a remarkable Southeastern Native American basket collection of immense artistry that eventually soared to over 400 pieces, many quite large. She maintained close friendships with so many of the Choctaw tribe who regularly visited. With help from her beloved grand nephew Mason, Mrs. Lyon's huge yard continued to look just perfect and her many prize azaleas remained quite beautiful until she entered assisted living in 2022. There, she quickly became a favorite of all.

At the center of Mrs. Lyon's heart, though, stood her four grandchildren, Sara Lyon Zavala, William Lyon, Kelsey Lyon, Rachel Lyon, and her precious great-grandchild Alex Zavala. They all spent tons of time with 'Granny' and all reflect her radiant personality in various wonderful ways.

Mrs. Mary Lyon was preceded in death by her parents John O. and Emma Smith Ball, husband Donnis C. Lyon, sisters Ruby Doris Ball, and Vaudie Vee Ball Bonner (husband Dr. O.D. Bonner); brothers Olen Ball, Dr. Billie Joe Ball, and George Ball, sister in law Delores Lyon Reeves, and brothers in law Felton Reeves and Dorman Lyon.

Mrs. Lyon is survived by her sons Kenneth Lyon (wife Donna Ford Lyon) of Ridgeland, Mississippi; Dr. Keith Lyon (wife Laura Ward Lyon) of Lake Lanier, Georgia; and Kevin Lyon (wife Tina Boykin Lyon) of Laurel; as well as two brothers, Donald Ball (wife Betty) of Galveston, Texas, and Floyd Ball (wife Linda) of Katy, Texas; her sisters Faye Ball Boone (husband Dr. Charles Boone) of Laurel, and Dr. Shirley Ball Harris (husband Reverend Dr. Joseph Harris) of Laurel, as well as two sisters in law, Jean Thornton Ball (widow of Dr. Billie Joe Ball) of Starkville, MS, and Doris Lowe Lyon (widow of Dorman Lyon) of Laurel. Mrs. Lyon also leaves four adored grandchildren, Sara Lyon Zavala (husband Irving) of Oak Grove, MS; William Lyon of Modesto, California; Kelsey Lyon of Sheridan, Wyoming; and Rachel Lyon of Ridgeland, MS.; and a great-grandson Alex Kevin Zavala of Oak Grove, MS.

Visitation will be held at First Baptist Church of Shady Grove in Laurel, MS on Sunday afternoon, April 21, from 12:30 until 1:00 for extended family, 1:00 until 2:00 for everyone, with funeral services following at 2:00 in the Shady Grove Baptist Church sanctuary and burial afterward at Shady Grove Baptist Cemetery. The Reverend Dr. Joseph Harris, Mrs. Lyon's brother-in-law, will officiate with pastoral assistance from the Reverend Chris Sledge and musical contributions by Joe Larry Mauldin and Mrs. Lyon's niece, Sheryl Boone. Pallbearers consist of son Kevin Lyon, son-in-law Irving Zavala, and grand nephews Mason Hennis, Darren Johnson, Drew Johnson, Andrew Phillips, and Dean Saul.

The Lyon and Ball families wish to thank all the relatives, friends, former colleagues, and students of Mrs. Lyon who have expressed their condolences in various deeply appreciated ways.

To sign the online guest book, visit [www.memorychapellaurel.com](http://www.memorychapellaurel.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Shady Grove Cemetery

4514 Hy 15 N  
Laurel, MS 39443

# Previous Events

## Visitation

APR 21. 1:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church of Shady Grove  
4514 Highway 15 North  
Laurel, MS 39443

## Service

APR 21. 2:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church of Shady Grove  
4514 Highway 15 North  
Laurel, MS 39443

# Tribute Wall

CH

“ I didn't know Mrs. Lyon, but Mr. Donnis was an awesome teacher!!!! He taught Our Sixth Grade Class and was an amazing and caring Teacher..and Coach....He was like a "Real Dad" to me and chose me to write the script for an end of the year play, He was so supportive,, I just wish I had told Him!!!! Charles Hudson.. Class of :1950!!!!!! Prayers for His Loved Ones.

Charles Hudson - April 22, 2024 at 08:18 PM

SZ

Mr. Hudson, thank you so much! As their granddaughter, I loved reading this and seeing how much Granddaddy meant to you and the impression he made on you. Both of them were one in a million

Sara Zavala - May 02, 2024 at 05:42 PM

MD

“ I have fond memories of Mary's kindness.



mary c denham - April 22, 2024 at 03:58 PM

SB

“ Aunt Mary was so dear to me! She was like a second mom. One of my earliest memories is of her pulling out the pots and pans in her kitchen for me to play with on the floor. I also remember her serving us lemonade in metal cups that felt so cold and refreshing! And she made the best pimiento cheese I've ever tasted! But most of all, I remember her beautiful smile and her loving heart, and the way her eyes would twinkle as she giggled. The world will be a little dimmer without that smile! I look forward to seeing it again some day when I see her again in heaven! ❤️❤️❤️



Sheryl Boone - April 19, 2024 at 02:49 PM

PG

“ One of the kindest women & best teachers ever. My girls loved her. I enjoyed the times she allowed me to substitute for her. Always a kind word & smile.

Paula Graham - April 19, 2024 at 02:45 PM



“ Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Mary Ball Lyon.



April 19, 2024 at 01:00 PM

JR

“ Jean Ball, John/Kim, & Randy/Barbara planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Ball Lyon.

Jean Ball, John/Kim, & Randy/Barbara - April 19, 2024 at 01:00 PM