



Mary Nelda Russ

September 29, 1941 - October 25, 2018

Mary Nelda Russ, age 77, passed away at home on October 25, 2018 after a sudden illness following out-patient surgery.

Loving Mother of daughter Karen Russ Thompson, son George N. Russ, and son Robert Russ. Proud Grandmama to Travis Thompson, Braxton Russ, Sydney Russ Grey, Libby Russ, Emersyn Russ and to her great grandchildren Blakely Grey and Holden Grey. Sister to Barbara Jernigan Phipps and Marsha Jernigan Goss who lovingly called her simply "Sister". "Aunt Sister" to nephews Allan Phipps, David Phipps and Benjamin Goss. Loved and cherished by many extended family members and friends.

She was preceded in death by her loving husband George Russ in 2017 and daughter Tanya Russ in 1976, and by her parents Nelton and Thelma Jernigan.

George (Snookie) and Mary Nelda were blessed to have shared a wonderful marriage lasting 57 years. They were seldom apart and she missed him dearly this past year.

Mary graduated from Florida State University with a dual degree in Education and Social Welfare. She taught 4th grade elementary school and music education in Wakulla County. She served as a speaker and fund raiser for the American Heart Association in honor of her daughter Tanya. Mary later switched career paths to work for the Wakulla County Health Department, Child Protective Services. Mary demonstrated a passion for social work and went on to obtain her Master's Degree in Social Services from FSU. She

moved up and onward working for the State of Florida on the first implementation of licensing of daycare and assisted living facilities. This was a ground breaking time in social services. She worked on programs that led the way for Medicaid licensing that would allow students with disabilities to attend public schools. She was an advocate for children and adults alike, also working with Adult and Aging Services. Mary worked for 2 private consulting firms monitoring regulation of the Medicaid program within public schools. She tracked Florida legislation affecting social services and served an internship in the State of Florida Governor's Office of Policy and Budget.

Even while working full time, her dedication to the children and families of Wakulla County continued. Mary organized a summer youth activity center at the Crawfordville Women's Club but soon decided it needed to be more. She then passionately organized a petition to the Wakulla Board of County Commissioners. The results established a committee on which she and others researched and obtained the first grant for the Wakulla County Recreation Park.

Her dedication inspired Auburn University to hire her to conduct training seminars for social workers. Noting her knowledge and experience, the State of Alabama then recruited Mary to serve as a District Director for Department of Children and Families. Employees working with Mary were treated with compassion and understanding. The focus of her work at this time was overseeing social worker case loads, conducting investigations of child abuse and neglect, and review and placement of children into foster care families. She always took every case to heart. One of Mary's favorite ways to express love for her family was through cooking. This carried over to her coworkers and she often provided huge home cooked luncheons at work to show her appreciation for them.

After retirement, with a continued desire to help others, Mary and George joined a local volunteer group in Alabama that focused on helping families transition from public assistance. They mentored many families, going as far

as babysitting the children in order to allow parents to attend classes. George taught one young Mother to drive a car so she could get her first driver's license. They were honored as the group volunteers of the year.

Mary was talented in every area. She loved playing the piano at home, at church, and for many events and weddings. She taught piano lessons. She was an exceptional cook. The meals she would describe as "just a snack" turned into full buffets. Fried cornbread will forever be a reminder of all the good meals we shared. She created flower arrangements that could rival any florist. It was not unusual to come home and see the entire kitchen table covered with fresh flowers and her at the counter adjusting and eyeing her creation. She was a perfectionist. She had a knack for decorating and could rearrange a space using almost nothing to make it look like a showroom (whether you wanted her to or not.) She had a pet peeve about keeping the pillows on the couch straight. She rearranged the entire Ronald McDonald House in Tallahassee, without asking, during the year she served as the Director. It had never looked better. An excellent seamstress, she designed and hand made the large Christmas banners that were often displayed in the windows of Crawfordville First Baptist Church during the Christmas Season. Her list of talents and gifts are too many to mention.

Mary Nelda loved her family and friends with all of her heart. She was a protector yet she knew when to let go. She was a fixer but would sure let you know when you needed to fix yourself. She insisted her children and grandchildren listen to her long opinion and advice speeches whenever she sensed something important was going on in your life. But, even if you didn't want to hear it or made a different decision she still loved and supported you. She was a force to be reckoned with but had the heart of an angel. Through her family's eyes no one will ever compare. She will be greatly and forever missed. I am sure she would brush away the accolades. She would insist that you always hold on to the happy memories with absolutely no regrets - that you live with no excuses and love with no regrets.

A Memorial Service and Celebration of Life will be held in her honor on Saturday, November 10, 2018, 11:00 am at Crawfordville First Baptist Church with fellowship afterwards at the Russ home.

Donations may be made to Wakulla County 4-H in honor of her love and advocacy for children and families.

Family Funeral Home & Cremation Services assisting the Russ family
(850)926-5919 or Familyfhc.com

Cemetery Details

Arran Cemetery

Arran Highway
Crawfordville, FL 32327

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

NOV **10**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Crawfordville First Baptist
3086 Crawfordville Highway
Crawfordville, FL 32327

Tribute Wall



“ *Young Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Mary Nelda Russ*



Family Funeral Home and Cremation Services - November 09, 2018 at 12:53 PM



Such a beautiful tribute to an amazing woman! She will be missed! There is no doubt that she is dancing with Jesus.

Jann Lennon - November 09, 2018 at 03:23 PM

BK



Brooks Karen - November 10, 2018 at 09:11 AM

SI

RIP Cuz. I have many cherished memories of spending time in Wakulla with my grandparents, my aunt Thelma & uncle nelton & 3 first cousins, Marsha, Barbara, & Mary Nelda. I mostly remember mary neldas cooking, piano playing, & being a loving mother, sister, & daughter.

susan hagler ingram - November 11, 2018 at 10:08 AM

CS

*We thank God for the privilege of having Mary Nelda as our neighbor and friend. She was a gracious and caring lady. I enjoyed reading the beautiful tribute her family shared about her. She was a special lady, and the difference she made in the lives of those she touched will live on from generation to generation. May we all be encouraged and motivated to redeem the time God has given us to make a difference. Mary Nelda is a person who achieved the good things He wanted her to accomplish through Him. I thank God for her life and her beautiful family. Love Always,
Charles and Glenda*

Charles and Glenda Sparks - November 16, 2018 at 11:56 AM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Nelda Russ.*



November 05, 2018 at 02:50 PM

Y2

“ *Your Edward Jones Friends and Family -Region 222 purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Mary Nelda Russ.*



Your Edward Jones Friends and Family -Region 222 -
November 02, 2018 at 02:27 PM

CH

“ Karen and family my God be with you during your time of loss. Mike and Carolyn Harvey



Carolyn Wrenn Harvey - November 01, 2018 at 01:22 PM

JJ

“ May God bless your family with Peace and comfort as only He can provide. Mary Nelda was a true blessing, a mentor, an exceptional boss and friend. I have thought of her often over the past few years with fondness and regret that I haven't reached out to reconnect. She and George were a blessing to Barbour County Alabama and to all of us who were blessed with their friendship.



Judy M Jochen - October 30, 2018 at 10:52 PM

CT

“ Charles And Yvonne Taylor lit a candle in memory of Mary Nelda Russ



Charles and Yvonne Taylor - October 30, 2018 at 05:27 PM

MM

“ Mary Nelda will always be remembered as a kind and caring person. I pray that her family and friends will be comforted by our Heavenly Father. May the precious memories sustain you in the coming days as she is remembered.

Mec Martin - October 30, 2018 at 02:23 PM