



Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia

March 8, 1925 - April 14, 2017

"Mary Elizabeth Gonia passed away at home as dawn broke on Good Friday morning, April 14, 2017. Her beloved son, Jim, was at her side. She was 92 years old. She died within weeks of moving back to her hometown of Clarkesville, GA. She was preceded in death by her husband of 70 years, James DeForrest Gonia, Sr. who died in September; and by her sister, Bess, Mrs. Peter Hodkinson III, of Clarkesville, GA, who passed away in January; her sister, Dot Dinstuhl, of New Orleans; her two brothers, Robert and Dewey Duncan, of Clarkesville, and her parents, Comer Dewey Duncan and Bessie Mae Gabrels of Clarkesville.

Her surviving family includes her son, James D. Gonia, Jr., of Clarkesville; her daughter, Gwen G. Osgood, of San Diego, CA; her grandson, Joshua L. Gonia, of Atlanta; her sister-in-law, Audrey Duncan Dixon, of Clarkesville; her nephew, Joey Duncan, of Cornelia; and her nieces, Becky Henning and Kathy Trombatore of Louisiana.

The Early Years

Our mother, Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia, was born on March 8, 1925, in Fairburn, GA. She was the second of 5 children. Moving to Clarkesville, GA, when she was just 13, Mom grew up in a wonderful small town within a warm and loving family. After high school, she went off to secretarial school at nearby Toccoa Falls Institute, where she met and fell in love with our father. He would return after World War II was over and ask her to marry him on the steps of Grace Calvary Episcopal Church. Mom gave birth to Gwen 3 years later, and 5 years after that, Jimmy was born.

A Mother's Love

We were always her first priority. She would make our school lunches, let us have spend-the-night parties and sleep-overs in the tree house. She would take us to Woolworth's dime store every Easter and let us pick out dyed purple and green baby chicks from the open counters where they were all packed in with feathers flying everywhere (seriously). Years later, she would sneak and give them away to Mr. Hamby, the "egg man". After a succession of ducks, parakeets and fish, she finally put her foot

down when Jimmy brought home a stray cat -- back when all cats were strictly taboo. Even worse, this one had an abscessed tail. Thoroughly horrified, Mom took it to the vet who promptly told her "Mizz Gonia, Jimmy needs this cat like a pig needs pockets!" After that fiasco, we finally wore her down to let us have a dog, and thus began our happy childhood with beagle puppies. Mom did all the clean up, of course!

Favorite Memories

My brother and I have a favorite picture of Mom -- she was sitting on the couch in our first house. She was wearing a white silk blouse, a string of pearls, and a skirt with stockings and heels. In the photo, Mom was folding diapers while I was holding a big rag doll with my cute chubby baby brother, Jimmy. I can still see my mother vacuuming the living room, singing along to a Frank Sinatra album on the hi-fi. And when she and Dad came upstairs one evening dressed in a tuxedo and ballgown for New Year's Eve, I remember being dazzled -- she looked exactly like Elizabeth Taylor. Mom was there when Hank Aaron batted his historic record setting home run at Turner Field (she was a huge baseball fan). We went to New York to see Carmen at The Metropolitan Opera and to Chastain Park to see Tony Bennett (her all-time favorite). Mom, Dad and the Axelburg's went many times to The Greenbriar, where they danced the night away to Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.

A Truly Good Person

When her grandson was 2 years old, Mom became Josh's "Nan" and she helped Jimmy raise him as if he were her own. She adored Josh and the love she showered him with was beyond anything you could imagine. She went to all his baseball games, took him back and forth to Big Canoe where she would read to him outdoors overlooking the mountains.

Despite being a full-time mother and grandmother, Mom always had time for the church. For many years, she was one of the Sermon Ladies at Peachtree Presbyterian Church, which really meant that she and her church buddies would "work" for 2 hours straight laughing their heads off and having the best time of their lives talking -- Mom's favorite past time!

The Best of Times

Throughout our lives, we were bound by a love that is impossible to describe in terms of our affection for each other. Every time we got together, we would talk non-stop about our cats, Fox News, the birds outside her window, or warm and funny memories about Dad. Talking non-stop and laughing until we cried were her greatest joys. Whoops -- forgot caramel cake, Mayfield's Homemade Vanilla ice cream, Aunt Audrey's sweet potato casserole, Chic-Fil-A sandwiches, and Aunt Sally's pralines! Oh what beautiful memories

we are blessed to have inherited.

Special Tributes

Today, we want to pay special tribute to Chaplain Calhoun, and all the many caregivers and hospice nurses who hovered over Mom during the last 2 years -- Vanessa Harrison, Sharon Fulbright, Jean Sullivan and Khadija Senhaji. Each of them not only cared for Mom, but each loved her deeply. These women have become like family to us and we thank them immensely for their devotion to our beloved mother.

We also want to thank Mom's incredible neighbors, Millie and Clay Threeton, who brought over flowers, ham, biscuits, sweet potatoes, all the time. And we are especially grateful to Becky Shelly, who hovered over Mom and Dad for the last 9 years bringing them dinner, getting them signed up for VA benefits, helping us find homecare, and being a family friend. Her sacrifice of time on our behalf has been astounding.

Our mother also took great pleasure from the multitude of visits from Lisa Axelburg. Lisa brought Mom numerous flower bouquets from her garden and would drop by to have fun with her talking about the "good old days". She even came with her brother, Steve Axelburg, on the day of Dad's funeral, and since Mom could not attend due to being bedridden, Lisa played old southern hymns on her Hammered Dulcimer at Mom's bedside for 3 hours while Steve regaled her with trout fishing stories about Dad and Howard.

Gratitude . . .

My brother, Jim, and I would also like to convey our family's gratitude to my Aunt Audrey, who visited Mom daily and brought scrumptious casseroles and caramel cakes. And most notably, her grandson, Josh, who looked after her lovingly for over a year, setting up little figurines in her room, hanging up 3 bird feeders outside her window, giving her meals, medicines, and lovingly caring for her.

We have so many wonderful memories. The most touching was when we recently had to tell Mom that Dad had passed away. She lifted her arms up to the sky and cried out loud to Dad . . . "We were so perfect for each other! Please save me a seat next to you" . . . Well, guess what, Mom? He DID save you a seat next to him! We love you & miss you so much. We're so happy you're finally in Heaven with Dad.

Events

APR **Graveside Service** 12:30PM

19

Georgia National Cemetery

1080 Veterans Cemetery Rd., Canton, GA, US

Comments



“ Jimmy, Gwen, Josh,

I just saw your Dad's. Looked up your Mom and found this. Your Mom was the best. She was always so sweet to me and always gave me a hug. I loved visiting with her. She will be missed.
Holly Harkey

holly harkey - October 23, 2017 at 12:29 PM



“ I loved taking care of your mom. Talking to her, being with her, we had fun together, enjoyed each other and we got close, too. She was a very strong woman, alert, very aware and funny. I always told her we are trying to preserve her, for the family Jim, Gwen and Josh. We were all surprised she passed myself, my husband and my mom. My mom visited her a couple of times and they enjoyed each others company. My mom and Mary were very similar in ways. Her favor dish was scrambled eggs and onions, toast with butter, and green tea with ginger which Jim brought home one day and she drank the tea fast and alot. So i would always have Jim buy the tea because she needed to drink fluids. Love and our deepest condolences from Jean, caregiver to her, my husband Shaheed and my mom Catherine.

Jean Sullivan - April 19, 2017 at 07:05 AM



“ Caring Condolences Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 02:13 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 01:33 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 01:31 PM



“ Sapphire Skies Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 01:22 PM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 01:11 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 01:05 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 01:02 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 17, 2017 at 12:44 PM



“ From: Becky and Mike Shelly purchased the Sapphire Skies Bouquet for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



From: Becky and Mike Shelly - April 17, 2017 at 09:52 AM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia.



April 15, 2017 at 07:11 PM



“ Chad Pendley lit a candle in memory of Mary Elizabeth Duncan Gonia



Chad Pendley - April 15, 2017 at 07:30 AM