



Mary F. Blankenbaker

JUL 17, 1936 - JAN 8, 2024



Scan to Visit

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Events	Page 6



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Mary F. Blankenbaker, born Mary Belle Fletcher, age 87, of Houston, Texas, passed away on January 8, 2024, from complications of Alzheimer's Disease.

Mary was born on July 17, 1936, to Lewis Oliver and Johnnie Louise Hammett Fletcher in DeRidder, Louisiana. She was very close to her siblings, Geraldine ("Gerry") and Lewis Wiley ("Dub"). Mary was active in her high school band, orchestra, and chorus, but she had a particular gift for piano and studied at Julliard in New York during the summer before her senior year of high school. An outstanding student, she graduated from DeRidder High School one year early, in 1953. Her yearbook phrase aptly describes the lovely disposition she retained her entire life: "It is with a friendly heart that has plenty of friends."

Mary studied one year at Louisiana State University before transferring to Centenary College where she majored in piano and minored in organ. While Centenary had many positives going for it, its true draw was the love of her life, Louis Gilbert Blankenbaker, who was also a student there. Louis and Mary were married at First Methodist Church in DeRidder on December 27, 1954 and recently celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary.

While at Centenary, Mary and Louis both sang in, and Mary served as the accompanist for, the Centenary College Choir. They traveled to Okinawa and Tokyo, Japan, and to Korea with the choir to perform for U.S. Troops overseas.

After graduating from college, Mary and Louis returned to DeRidder where she began her long and rewarding careers of teaching piano and serving as church organist. Over time, their family expanded with three children: Karen Beth, Jeffrey Louis, and Timothy James.

In 1969 the family moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where Mary continued teaching piano and serving as organist at Glen Leven Presbyterian Church. After three years in Nashville, during which time Louis received his Masters of Divinity from Vanderbilt University, the family returned to Louisiana. During their several moves, Mary continued to teach piano and serve as



Obituary

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organist for churches in Moss Bluff, Shreveport, and Lafayette. In 1984, Mary and Louis moved to the Atlanta area – to Roswell (and subsequently Newnan) Georgia, where Mary continued to be a popular piano teacher.

In the spring of 1992, Mary obtained her Masters in Piano Pedagogy and Performance from the University of West Georgia. At her Master’s Recital, she delivered an outstanding performance of Schubert’s Impromptu, Op. 90, D. 899: No. 1 in C Minor, Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 26 in E Flat Major, and Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 8 in C Minor, Op. 13 “Pathétique.”

Throughout her life, Mary was the consummate friend, host, and artist. She was an exceptional cook and not only enjoyed preparing outstanding meals and desserts, but always took great care to decorate and set a lovely table. Her nieces and nephews and her children’s friends loved visiting their home because of how welcoming it was. Mary at heart was a joyful person and her family and friends recall the laughter and happy times they shared.

Mary was a ready volunteer whether at church, her community, or with the Louisiana Music Teachers Association, where she not only was appreciated for her musical and organizational talents but also for her famous “Rally Cake” which she was counted on to bake and share every year. In addition to piano and organ, she enjoyed playing bridge, tole painting, and macrame. She and Louis attended symphony and musical concerts wherever they lived, and they found particular joy in traveling many years to the Summer Institute and Festival in Brevard, North Carolina, with their beloved Schnauzer, Max.

Mary was predeceased by her parents Lewis O. and Louise H. Fletcher, her brother Lewis Wiley Fletcher, and her son Jeffrey Louis Blankenbaker. She is survived by her loving husband, Louis Gilbert Blankenbaker, her daughter and son-in-law Karen and Douglas Peck, her son and daughter-in-law Timothy and Rebecca Blankenbaker, her grandchildren Caroline Peck Quoyeser and husband Alexander Quoyeser, Daniel Charles Peck, and Elizabeth Louise Blankenbaker, her sister and brother-in-law, Geraldine and Warren Smith, her sister-in-law Abbie Terry Fletcher, and numerous much-loved nieces and nephews and their families.

A Memorial Service will be held in the Sanctuary of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, 5501 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77004 on Saturday, January 27th at 10:30 a.m., with a reception to follow in the church parlor. Interment will be held with a Graveside Service in Beauregard Cemetery, Highway 171, DeRidder, Louisiana, 70634 at 11 a.m. on Monday, January 29th. For those



Obituary

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JUL 17, 1936 - JAN 8, 2024

who desire, donations in Mary's memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, www.alz.org, or to the St. Paul's Chamber Music Society, 5501 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77004.

Mary's family would like to express their sincere appreciation to the nurses and staff at Villa Toscana for their loving care of Mary and their appreciation of her sweet smile during this last period of her life.




Events


Mary F. Blankenbaker

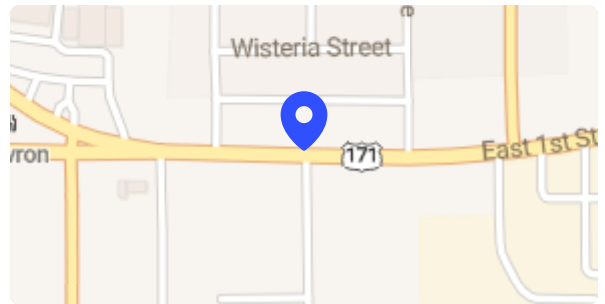
JUL 17, 1936 - JAN 8, 2024

Graveside Service

 **Monday**, January 29, 2024

 11:00 AM CT

 **Beauregard Cemetery**
1216-1242 E First St, Deridder LA 70634





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Mary by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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