Sossoman
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Gleta Harris Byrd

May 8, 1924 - Oct. 15, 2021

With great sadness, the family of Gleta Harris Byrd, 97, of Drexel, NC, acknowledges her passing on October 15, 2021. Gleta entered into her heavenly life confident that she would be reunited with her beloved husband, Joseph Kincaid Byrd, who she met in the clarinet section of the Drexel High School band in the late 1930s. She is preceded in death by her siblings, Dorothy Greer, Earline Edwards, Hal Harris, Max Harris and Phyllis Coleman. She is survived by her sisters-in-law Patricia Harris of Austin, TX and Elizabeth Harris of Charlotte and her brother-in-law JC Edwards of Raleigh.

Gleta was born in Burke County on May 8, 1924, the second and last surviving child of Jim and Ruby Harris. She lived in Drexel all her life with the exception of the time in Chapel Hill where she and Joe lived during his years at UNC Law School. She joined the WACS during World War II and received her RN degree at NC Baptist Hospital in 1946. She used those skills as a nurse at Watts Hospital in Durham when she and Joe lived in Chapel Hill and later on at Valdese General Hospital.

In the beginning of their marriage, Joe and Gleta made an agreement: He would join her church if she would join his political party. Since both were strong in their beliefs, both thought they got a good deal. As a result, he sang in the choir and taught Sunday school for 52 years at Drexel First Baptist Church and she supported him

Sunday school for 62 years at Brexel First Baptist Church and she supported him throughout his political career in state and local politics—even licking envelopes at the Democratic headquarters.

Through the years of raising seven children, Gleta mastered the art of tending to her yard and garden, cooking for nine people daily, canning and freezing vegetables for

decades, hosting ladies circle meetings and chauffeuring until the older ones could assist with that. Her family always had dogs around and later in life were attached to their beloved cats Buddy and Waldo. Old age also brought a fascination with crossword puzzles and Scrabble, which was always played by Gleta's rules.

Joe and Gleta were generous philanthropists with regular contributions to their church as well the Burke County Habitat for Humanity, giving money as well as land grants. They also collected funds for churches in Cape Town, South Africa and visited these churches in 2002.

Gleta will best be remembered for her agreeable disposition, her devotion to her husband, generosity toward her family and her love of small-town life. One of her favorite poems was from Joe:

Tho' years mark toll upon eyesight

and upon hearing and walking too,

they make no change in my love

and gratitude for you.

Every day of my life I thank God

for helping me win your heart.

My love for you continues

As bright as at its start.

I remain yours till the end of life’s journey.

December 19, 2000

At the end of her journey, Gleta is survived by her children Elaine Farge, Joe K. Byrd, Jr, Jane Poteat (Johnny), Ann Martin (Frank), Jim Byrd, Philip Byrd (Rhonda) and Eric Byrd; six granddaughters, Tonya Williams, Cheryl Brackett (Chad), Erin Byrd, Allison Scott (Tyler), Danielle Byrd and Hannah Martin (Steven Feingold); seven great grandchildren Brentani Detter, Kreg Fulbright, Chase Brackett, Cydney Brackett, Leiton Young, Lucas Byrd and Graham Scott; two great-great grandchildren Kylie Rae Duckworth and Triton Fulbright, and numerous nieces and nephews across the country.

The family would like to extend their appreciation to Gleta’s devoted home caregivers, Brenda Ruppard, Elizabeth Smith and Linda Summerlin, who provided so much love, support and tender loving care over the last years.

Services will be held at Sossoman Funeral Home and Chapel on Sunday, October 24 at 2:00 p.m. The family request that all attendees wear a mask inside the building.

Those wishing to honor Gleta's life can donate in her memory to Burke County Habitat for Humanity, Drexel First Baptist Church or the charity of their choosing.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.