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Joyce Elaine Gouge Byrd

May 1, 1931 - Oct. 31, 2017

Joyce Elaine Gouge Byrd, 86, of Morganton, departed this life and went to her heavenly home on October 31, 2017, after a brief illness. Mrs. Byrd was born on May 1, 1931, in Mount Airy, North Carolina, the daughter of Esse V. Gouge and Sadie Dixon Gouge. She is preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Robert Bond “Bob” Byrd, and her sisters, Reba Carter, Sarah Medlin, and Jo Ann Holt.

She is survived by her brother, Esse V. Gouge, Jr. and wife, Gayle, of Black Mountain, sister-in-law, Gleta H. Byrd of Drexel, children Robert Bond Byrd, II and wife, Shirley, Dixon Duckworth Byrd and wife, Jeanie, and Sara Lou Byrd Succop and husband, Benjamin Succop. Her grandchildren are: Jamie Dara Allman, Dr. Jillian Leigh Byrd, Kathryn Joy Byrd, Caitlyn Byrd Milam and husband, Dr. Ronald Milam, Jr., Dr. Caroline Byrd Hornburg and husband, David Hornburg, Colston Jennings Byrd, Madison Dixon Brea Byrd, Benjamin Sterling Succop, Jr., and Sara Byrd Succop. Many nieces and nephews are also left to cherish her memory.

Graduating salutatorian and member of the All-State Basketball Team in 1946 from Black Mountain High School, Joy was afforded the opportunity to attend Berea College in Kentucky. Joy met Bob while they were working at the Boone Tavern on campus. When Joy and Bob graduated, they both decided to further their education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Joy received her Master’s in Physical Education and began her career teaching high school in Pittsboro, North Carolina

while Bob was in Law School. After their marriage and Bob's graduation, they returned to Morganton in 1955. Joy continued her teaching career at Morganton High School and Bob joined his brother, Joe, to practice law. Their firm later was named Byrd, Byrd, and Ervin.

Being the daughter of a church organist, Joy spent a great deal of time at church and was devoted to the Lord. She had fond memories of sitting by her mother and seeing Dr. Billy Graham in the balcony. Her last trip outside of Morganton was to the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte with her grandson, Benjamin. Joy was a member of First United Methodist Church of Morganton. She served as a Sunday School teacher for over thirty years. Joy especially enjoyed teaching children and members of the Aldersgate Class.

Joy was a passionate advocate and activist for public education. Joy, Bob, Reverend Willie Flemon McIntosh, Jr, and wife, Nettie, supported the integration of the Burke County Schools. At Mountain View Elementary School, Joy was a volunteer and substitute teacher. She implemented the Mountain View Preschool Project.

As a former president of the Morganton Service League, Joy served all members of the community. In a November 2005 interview, Joy stated: "By joining together, we are able to achieve great things." Joy, Lou Deal, and numerous other league members helped with a production "Oh Penelope." Ed Grady, a family friend and Freedom High School drama instructor, directed the show.

Community service was of great significance to Joy. Besides being president of the American Field Service and hosting several foreign exchange students, she also served as a Trustee at Brevard College and Givens Estates Retirement Community.

Holidays were a big event at the Byrd home. Realizing the importance of celebrating Independence Day, Joy choreographed and led the synchronized swimming program for the Annual July Fourth Celebration at Morganton's Recreation Department. To end the festivities, she dove off the high dive with a lighted torch.

Joy was well known for her passion for golf. She scored two hole-in-ones at Mimosa Hills Country Club. She particularly enjoyed playing golf with Patsy Bowers. As a member of the Western League, she traveled to many golf courses in North Carolina and always enjoyed the competition. She was an avid follower of UNC basketball and took pride in supporting the program. In 1970, Joy and Bob hosted UNC player George Karl at their home in Morganton for a UNC basketball camp. In fact, the Byrd

home was known as a happy gathering place for the entire community.
Joy Byrd's life touched many others. Described in the words of her grandson, Benjamin:
As we walk on the pathway of our lives, we are occasionally fortunate enough to have true angels walking beside us. I was one of those lucky few, because I had my grandmother. As her very name illustrates, she was the embodiment of Joy for our family, a wellspring of wisdom, love, and encouragement coupled with a fiery competitiveness and passion for life that inspired all those around her. Whether it was her dedicated role in helping integrate the public schools of Burke County 50 years ago, her zest for the golf course (in which she consistently outplayed her children and grandchildren), those intense Scrabble games in her apartment that always seemed to come down to the final word, or that last trip we took together to the Billy Graham Library over the summer, Joy was a shining light for the community, for her family, and for me. Grandmommy, even as I grieve for your absence, I celebrate the time we had together. The obituary may show a lifespan in years, but the joy you brought to our lives is truly timeless. Now, after this last journey, you've finally found my grandfather in his rose garden. You were the only grandparent I ever got to know, but you were the best one I could ask for. I'll miss you.
Sincere appreciation is extended to: The staff of Grace Ridge Retirement Community, Burke Hospice and Palliative Care, Dr. David Abernathy, Dr. Ryan Miller, Dr. Leon Goudas, Dr. William Walton, II, Dr. Jonathan Lowry, Kay Clark, RN, Susan Fike, BSN, Dawn McGimsey, BSN, Nancy Cummings, LPN, Loretta Jackson, Mamie and Willie Kincaid, and other wonderful caregivers and special friends. A celebration of Joy's life will be held on Saturday, November 25, 2017, at 2:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, Morganton, North Carolina. Online condolences may be made to Sossoman Funeral Home's website. In lieu of flowers, please send memorial contributions:
First United Methodist Church, "Sunday School of Rock for Children," 200 North King Street, Morganton, NC 28655 or Burke Hospice and Palliative Care, 1712 Enon Road, Valdese, NC 28690 or North Carolina School of Science and Math – Morganton, NCSSM Foundation, 1219 Broad Street, Durham, NC 27705.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.