



*Rosemary Lyons
McMullan*

Feb. 2, 1927 - Dec. 27, 2020

Rosemary Lyons McMullan passed away peacefully on Sunday, Dec. 27 in Morganton, North Carolina where she lived with her daughter Mary Charlotte Safford for five wonderful years. Rosemary will be remembered by her loving family and legions of friends for her boundless love, kindness, and charity driven by her Christian faith, all wrapped together in a tremendous sense of humor that sustained her through the ups, and occasional downs, of her long life.

Rosemary was born in Omaha, Nebraska on February 2, 1927 to Dr. Jeremiah "Jerry" Lyons and Rose Clare Gentleman Lyons. She had a wonderful childhood with her mother and father, whom she and her brother Bob always referred to as Durry. Her childhood was spent in the loving embrace of her family and she was involved in figure skating, innocent high jinks with her friends, and evading numerous suitors. Rosemary attended Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart and then Duchesne College. She treasured her time at Duchesne and believed it fully prepared her for life. After graduating from Duchesne, she and her friend Nadine set out for New York City to find their fame and fortune. She found a job with the public relations firm of Robert Taplinger and she said the best part of her job was that the office was across the street from St. Patrick's Cathedral. Rosemary experienced the best the city had to offer with Broadway shows, concerts, restaurants, and time visiting the wonderful bookstores.

While in New York, Rosemary met a young man from Mississippi, W. Patrick (Pat) McMullan, Jr., who courted her with Sunday afternoon “tea dances,” dates at the Oyster Bar in Grand Central Station, and weekends at Fire Island, NY. After enlisting his father Pat, Sr. to come to New York to help win her affections, Pat, Jr. proposed to

Rosemary and they were married in Omaha in November 1950. They moved to Newton, MS, where Pat was starting his career in banking. Soon the family started growing, and Rosemary focused on raising her children, starting with Julie, Pat III, Michael, Mary Charlotte and, later in Jackson, Robert. While in Newton, Rosemary was active in St. Ann’s Catholic Church, a small mission church with a traveling priest. She was soon playing the organ at Mass, sometimes with one or more of her children crawling around her feet. Rosemary was surrounded by the large McMullan family and became close to them, including her lifelong friend and sister-in-law, Georgie McMullan. The somewhat exotic Irish Catholic girl from Omaha charmed her new relations and became a full member of the extended McMullan family. She was followed to Mississippi by her brother Bob, who settled in Jackson in 1951 and was a frequent visitor to Rosemary’s and Pat’s Newton home. Rosemary embraced the rural, small town life of her new home. She often brought her children to the small downtown to watch the trains go by and they enjoyed many afternoons at the old cabin at Spring Lake.

Rosemary and the family moved to Jackson and eventually settled into their home on Dogwood Drive. She was the primary parent to her sometimes-rambunctious children and kept things in line with love and humor mixed with toughness and “The Look,” which could stop a charging bull in its tracks. She kept her children mostly in line. She became a wonderful cook and kept her family and family friends well fed. She once introduced one of her son’s close friends by saying, “He grew up in my refrigerator.” Wonderful Sunday lunches became a family mainstay and lasted for decades to be enjoyed by many of her grandchildren. After some of her children moved away and came home to visit, she would often send them to the airport on Sunday afternoons with containers of leftovers to be enjoyed on the plane. There was the rare misstep, like boiled brussels sprouts or vegetable (vs. lime) jello, that became family lore and generated laughter for many years.

Besides raising her family, Rosemary was always immersed in serving her community. She became an active member and a pillar of St. Richard Catholic

community. She became an active member and a pillar of St. Richard Catholic Church. Her roles included Eucharistic Minister, Parish Council member, and codirector and cofounder of REACH, a nondenominational program that provided faith lessons, fellowship, and fun for adults with disabilities. Rosemary served on

several nonprofit boards including St. Dominic Hospital, Habitat for Humanity, the Junior League, and the Mississippi Arts Council. Her most treasured service was direct interaction with others such as helping those in need, leading Great Books discussions with young people, or celebrating with her REACH family. After her children were grown, Rosemary returned to the workforce as the Public Relations Director at St. Joseph Catholic High School where her grandchildren were enrolled. Besides press releases and covering school activities, Rosemary helped establish the growing Fine Arts program and brought performances of music, dance, and theatre to the school. Her grandchildren also remember her setting a proper table at the school to help children with their manners and etiquette.

After the death of her father Durry, her mother Rose moved to Jackson and became an integral part of Rosemary's Mississippi family. The family continued to grow with the arrival of grandchildren and great grandchildren. When her first grandchild was born, Rosemary became "Tutu," Hawaiian for grandmother. Her grandchildren, great grandchildren, all their friends and many others referred to her by this name. Several young friends said Tutu was like a mother to them.

After 65 years in Mississippi, Rosemary moved to Morganton to live with Mary Charlotte and her family. She loved her North Carolina home and enjoyed long drives in the mountains and walks by the Catawba River. Her happy place was sitting on the back porch listening to the birds. Rosemary always loved the beautiful world God created and the first thing she did every morning was open the blinds to look at the sky and the trees. Rosemary became a member of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church. She loved her new faith home and regularly attended daily Mass. Many thanks to her special friend Cindy Hicks who took her on many adventures and always gave her loving care.

Rosemary was the perfect role model to her children as to how to lead their lives. Her life exemplified kindness, generosity, and service to others. She never met a stranger and treated every single person she encountered with equal love, attention, and

respect. Rosemary had a special place in her heart for the lonely and taught her children to always reach out to the person in the room who seemed uncomfortable or alone. Her humor and zest for life shined forth from her beautiful smile that she shared with everyone – she knew that a smile could brighten someone's day.

Rosemary was preceded in death by her parents, her brother, her granddaughter Kathleen Kehoe, and son-in-law Bill Kehoe.

She is survived by her children Julie Kehoe, Pat McMullan (Rachel), Michael McMullan (Jeanie), Mary Charlotte Safford (Randy) and Robert McMullan (Deborah). She is also survived by her grandchildren Erin Rose Boland (Jon), Mary Clare Tanner, Will Kehoe (Kemper), Andrew Kehoe, Pace McMullan, Isabel McMullan (Josh), Michael McMullan, Jr. (Veronica), Emily Stanley (Jeff), Stephen McMullan (Allison), Charlotte Ward (Thomas), Matthew Safford, Jeremiah Safford, Mollie McMullan, Robert McMullan, and William McMullan.

A private Funeral Mass will be held for the family at 11 a.m., Saturday, January 2 at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church. A celebration of Rosemary's life will be held later at St. Richard Catholic Church in Jackson, Mississippi.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, Morganton, North Carolina, St. Richard Catholic Church, Jackson, Mississippi, or a charity of choice.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.