



## Mary John Spence

March 16, 1921 - October 21, 2015

Mary John Grelling Spence, age 94, passed away at home peacefully in the presence of her Lord on October 21, 2015. Mary John was born in Atlanta, Georgia on March 16, 1921. She has lived in Tyler since 1926. She attended Tyler Public Schools, graduated from Hockaday in Dallas and attended Hollins College in Virginia and The University of Texas at Austin.

At The University, she met the love of her life, Ralph Spence. After that first blind date, unbeknownst to the other, they each called their parents to say they had met the person they were going to marry. Together, they lived their life in service to others.

She had a steadfast faith and was a dedicated member of Christ Episcopal Church, Tyler, and her cherished Thursday morning Bible Study which she founded. She served as a Life Member of the Vestry, member of the Endowment Fund Board, President of the Women of the Church, Chairman of the Altar Guild, Youth Group Sponsor after World War II and Sunday School teacher. She was on the Capital Steering Committee and Chapel Task Force of All Saint's Episcopal School.

One of the last of the Great Generation, she enjoyed life to the fullest with amazing energy, never wanting to miss anything! Watching sports, playing games with her grandchildren, movies starring Rock Hudson and laughing

with her many friends and family all gave her great delight. She was a great multi-tasker, even shooting dove and needlepointing at the same time.

Mary John loved being a Kappa Kappa Gamma and sharing that sisterhood with her mother, Mae Kyle, her two daughters and many special friends. It was always an exciting time when each year a new group of Tyler girls went thru Rush. The phone rang off the wall!

As the 1940 Queen of The Texas Rose Festival, she was the first to be crowned in Caldwell Auditorium. In recent years, she enjoyed being the “oldest living Queen.” She remained active and supportive of the Festival throughout her life as a volunteer, party host and sponsor of numerous duchesses and their families. She was also instrumental in the development of the Tyler Rose Museum

Her passion for Tyler was demonstrated through her leadership on multiple community boards, including Tyler Museum of Art, Salvation Army Women’s Auxiliary, UT Tyler, St. John’s Episcopal Day Care Center, Junior League of Tyler and the Gertrude Windsor Garden Club, GCA.

Mary John received many honors. She was awarded the Gertrude Windsor Award by The Junior League of Tyler, and the Isadore Roosth Outstanding Philanthropist Award by the East Texas Communities Foundation, Women of Distinction Award by Texas College and the Grand Marshall of its Homecoming Parade.

Mrs. Spence is preceded in death by her mother, Florence Carlton Grelling; her parents, Mae Kyle and Louis Grelling, Jr.; her husband of 52 years, Ralph Spence; their first born child, Katy; and her brother, Louis Alden Grelling, III. She is survived by her beloved children, Louise and Guy Griffeth of Dallas; Judy and Charles Tate of Houston; Tancy and Ralph Spence, Jr. of Billings,

Montana; grandchildren, Spence and Teal Griffeth, Mary John Frank, Louise and Drew Pennebaker, Carver and James Tate, Ralph III, Nash and Benjamin Spence and great-grandchildren Robert and John Pennebaker; and a number of loving cousins, nieces and nephews.

Services are scheduled for 11:00 a.m. on Monday, October 26, 2015 at Christ Episcopal Church, 118 South Bois D'Arc, Tyler, Texas with The Reverend David Luckenbach officiating and the Very Reverend M.L. Agnew, Jr. delivering the homily.

Smith Reynolds, IV will serve as Acolyte. Pallbearers will be Allen Bell, Henry Bell, III, Harry Caserta, Denning Key, Harry Frost, David Lanford, Smith Reynolds III and Elam Swann. Honorary pallbearers are Upton Beall, Jim Deakins, James McCain, Wade Ridley, Bud Scarborough, Elmer Ellis and Dr. William Starling.

Our family would like to thank Cora Cunningham and Pat Taylor for their many years of loyal service and dedication to Mother and the family. We would also like to extend grateful appreciation for the compassionate care and friendship of Dawn Logan, Ruth McGee, Leatrice Johnson and Charwyn Mosley-Johnson. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the loving support of Oliver R. Hollenshead, Thorndike Lewis, Leonard Cunningham and Ray Hensley.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Christ Episcopal Church, 118 South Bois D'Arc, Tyler, Texas 75702 or the charity of your choice.

This tribute would not be complete without sharing a few of Mary John's words of wisdom.

"Pretty is as pretty does."

“Two wrongs don’t make a right.”

“Make sure everyone is having a good time.”

“A sunset is just as pretty as a sunrise.”

“You can never be too gaudy at Christmas.”

“Get off your high horse.”

“You get what you give.”

“Stop coming and come!”

“Be happy!”

# Cemetery Details

## Rose Hill Cemetery

2400 S. Donnybrook  
Tyler, TX 75702

# Previous Events

## Service

OCT **26**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Christ Episcopal Church  
118 South Bois d' Arc  
Tyler, TX 75702

## Graveside Serv.

OCT **26**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Rose Hill Cemetery  
2400 S. Donnybrook  
Tyler, TX 75702

# Tribute Wall



“ I am so very sorry for your loss. The Bible makes this comforting promise: "Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted, he saves those crushed in spirit." (Psalm 34:18) It also assures us: "Throw your burden on Jehovah, and he will sustain you." (Psalm 55:22) May these thoughts bring you a measure of comfort at this difficult time.

H - October 25, 2015 at 06:10 PM



“ Judy and Louise so very sorry , having just lost my mother I know how much condolences and friends make. Thoughts and prayers to you and your family- Alice Lipscomb



Alice Lipscomb - October 24, 2015 at 07:57 PM



“ I was an insecure child, but I NEVER felt bad about myself in Aunt Pokey's august yet folksy presence. She just loved and loved., and made happiness happen. Love her and all of hers, Ralph Nance.

Ralph Nance - October 23, 2015 at 04:18 PM



“ Diane Sims lit a candle in memory of Mary John Spence



diane sims - October 23, 2015 at 03:08 PM