



Mary Idell Berrong

August 12, 1914 - August 12, 2014

Mary Idell Harkins Berrong
Teacher & World Traveler

Mary Harkins Berrong of Fort Collins (formerly of Boulder) passed away peacefully on her 100th birthday in Fort Collins, CO at Collinwood Assisted Care. She was in the care of and surrounded by her family at the time of her passing.

Mary was born August 12, 1914 to Roy B. Harkins and Bessie (Moulton) Harkins at Grimes, Oklahoma. She graduated from Sayre High School in 1931, Southwestern State University in 1934 (B.A.), and Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville in 1951 (M.A.). She continued her university studies at the University of Colorado, Pittsburgh University, and Colorado School of Mines. She was a retired teacher whose assignments ranged from third grade through graduate programs at both Oklahoma University and Southwestern State University. She taught 14 years in Oklahoma and 26 years in the Boulder Valley Schools. She taught at both Foothills Elementary and Centennial in Boulder and completed her career at Broomfield Junior High.

She was quite active professionally during her 40 years of teaching. She organized science teachers in both Oklahoma and Colorado and published local, state, and national articles. As well as writing study courses, she

conducted science workshops in five states. She was a frequent speaker on local, state, and national levels. She was pleased to have the experiences of speaking on radio, appearing on television, and assisting with the Helpmobile as a demonstration teacher. In addition to six teacher and science organizations, she enjoyed membership in Kappa Kappa Iota, Kappa Delta Pi, and Delta Kappa Gamma.

Following retirement, her major interest turned to travel – world travel. She was a member of Traveler's Century Club (a minimum of 100 countries visited for membership). At the time of her death, she'd logged in 140 countries. Her other interests included the care of her Martin Acres home, her numerous flower gardens, block parties, and delight in educational day trips about Colorado. She was also active in the organizations of AARP, WmWa, BVRT, and Senior Singles.

She married J. Everett Berrong on Christmas Day, 1934 and moved to Boulder in 1953 from Weatherford, OK with their two sons, Bert (Vera) of Brighton & Godly, TX and Nik (JoAnn) of Fort Collins. She had three grandchildren – Michele (Douglas) of Rohnert Park, CA, Brett (Kiersten) of Fort Collins, and Stacy (Jeanette) of Woodland, CA. She also enjoyed the presence of five great-grandchildren. Her husband passed away September 22, 1982 while on a Canadian vacation. At her request, cremation took place and her family scattered her ashes with her husband's in the Rocky Mountains.

The forgoing is, largely, honoring our mother's wish to publish "the facts, just the facts" for her eventual obituary. Now that she's departed this phase of life, her sons will provide their addendum: Our mother didn't surprise us with her passing exactly on her 100th birthday, since we knew well of her punctual and ever-organizing style. We believe her agenda-driven lifestyle contained an element of pleading with her Maker to have her exit coincide with her entry, 100 years later. Apparently, she was successful in her bidding.

This wonderful woman, always a staunch defender of her family and the needy, often characterized herself as not knowing how to “play well with others”. Quite the contrary, she routinely “played well” with many others, but normally on a mentoring and sharing basis. Numerous acquaintances, both professional and casual, have attested to that. This world traveler experienced the fjords of Norway, wandered among the penguins of the Antarctic, camped for four weeks with retired oil geologists in the Great Rift Valley, enjoyed a one-of-a-kind World War II memory cruise in the Pacific with veterans, accompanied her granddaughter on a round the world Semester at Sea cruise (a student at 68), and flew in a competition aerobatic plane with her older son. All-in-all, she gave new dimensions to the “Bucket List” and, most of it, while using only one carry-on bag. A sailing vessel cruise of the Mediterranean was her last trip, at age 87. She passed on the carry-on bag to another dreamer. Her last moments of life were bathed in love from her family members who had the blessing of sharing her last moments. Mary Berrong had an enormous impact on us all and her memory will be cherished.

Memorials may be sent to the Salvation Army (her favorite charity) and Pathways Hospice in Fort Collins, CO. The family gives special thanks to the compassionate and high quality care of the staff at Collinwood Assisted Living, her dear friend, John Merritt, of Home Instead, the staff of Centre Avenue Health & Rehab, and those from Pathways Hospice.

Tribute Wall



“ *Mary Idell Berrong*

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM



“ *Mary, you left me with some great attributes - the first two being Sharing and Caring. Your love of Science and education was contagious. Thank you for all you've given to me, your colleagues, and especially your students. I miss you...*

Bob Carlisle

Bob Carlisle - August 31, 2014 at 09:02 PM



“ *Mary was truly an inspirational teacher. Her love of science spilled over to those of us who were fortunate to be in her class. I particularly remember a field trip she took us on to hunt for fossils. My friend and I later rode there on our bikes. It was kind of far and kind of scary, but that's what scientists do, right? I wonder how many out there were inspired to go into the field of science in part due to her influence. I know there are many who have a deeper appreciation of science and of learning and of adventure as a result of her teaching. What a legacy.*

Susan Nguyen - August 22, 2014 at 12:10 PM



Barbara Diehl

Susan, I was in that class too, and remember that we headed out to what I found out later was the Niobrara Foundation, by Nebo road. Remember the egg cartons we took to gather samples? Mrs. Berrong was a kick, and though many in her classes were ruthless, she was basically a wonderful teacher and truly loved her classes.
Barb (Rogers) Diehl

Barbara Diehl - August 22, 2014 at 08:35 PM

BB

“ *Brett Berrong lit a candle in memory of Mary Idell Berrong*



Brett Berrong - August 22, 2014 at 09:28 AM

LS

“ *Mary was in DKG and I am now the president of DKG. I visited Mary at her home in Boulder and in the assisted living in Ft. Collins. I currently teach science at Centennial and Mary and I talked a lot about our experiences. She gave me all of her topography maps for one of my science units. I loved Mary and thought she was a great lady. My thought and prayers to Mary's Family.*

linda scherer - August 21, 2014 at 10:46 PM

BB

“ *I was a teacher at the old Broomfield Jr High with Mary. She was one of the most highly organized & disciplined persons I've known. She once showed me her class notebook that in great detailed listed every lesson plan for the entire school year. Mary, wherever you are now, you got the last laugh. Passing on the exact 100th date of your birth. Thats discipline & planning!*
Bob Birnberg

Bob Birnberg - August 21, 2014 at 06:44 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mary Idell Berrong.*



August 21, 2014 at 01:26 PM



“ *"I had the pleasure and honor of being able to visit with Mary for the past 2 years. She was always positive, and always ready to talk about almost anything. Mary dearly loved to watch old movies, such as "Dave" and especially episodes of the TV series "Hogan's Heroes." We must have watched every episode at least six times! The stories she told of growing up, and teaching, and traveling the world are priceless, and I will never forget them, or her. She was a friend, and I felt like a part of her family because she always treated me as one. We've lost a treasure who will be missed by all who knew her.
God Speed, Mary, God Speed."
John Merritt*

John Merritt - August 21, 2014 at 11:54 AM



“ *Mary Berrong is a lasting memory for me and many of my friends who were fortunate to enjoy her science class at Centennial Junior High in 1961. She and my mother, Jeanne, both taught at Centennial and were good friends. Mrs. Berrong has left a lifelong impression on me. She cultivated a great interest in science and stimulated my imagination. Thank you Mrs. Berrong!
Jim Sible*

Jim Sible - August 21, 2014 at 08:56 AM

SN

Jim, I want to let you know how very much your mother was appreciated, as well. Both women were wonderful, caring teachers who stand out as super stars in the teaching profession. I think of them both often.

Susan Nguyen - August 22, 2014 at 12:02 PM

VW

Jimmy, Susan is so right on with these awesome women and how dedicated they were as teachers. I can still see Mary driving her white Valiant passing me as I was walking to school!

God Bless and loving prayers to the family.

Vickie Smith Williamson

(Please call me again I erased your message by mistake!)

Vickie Williamson - August 26, 2014 at 01:57 PM

RZ

“MANY years ago I attended Centennial Junior High School in Boulder. Through some schedule quirk, I was one of only a few not to have your mother for 8th grade science. But I knew her--and more importantly, I knew OF her, due to her reputation--and I thought very highly of her. I didn't know anyone who didn't. She was a most distinguished educator, and even we as goofy early teens recognized that clearly.

This obituary is a lovely tribute to a remarkable woman who led an astonishing life. Passing away on her 100th birthday! What style!

Rick Zier, Fort Collins

Rick Zier - August 21, 2014 at 07:52 AM

AE

“ Adam Eisenberg lit a candle in memory of Mary Idell Berrong



Adam Eisenberg - August 21, 2014 at 12:39 AM

MB

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Michele Berrong - August 20, 2014 at 10:47 PM

SM

She was a beautiful woman, and though I never met her, what you shared with us, showed me she had a loving beautiful heart as well Michele! And from the sounds of the many notes posted here, she sounds like a spunky one too!! Love you Michele! Sorry for your loss!! XO!

Suzi Miller - August 22, 2014 at 04:51 PM

MB

“ Michele Berrong lit a candle in memory of Mary Idell Berrong



Michele Berrong - August 20, 2014 at 10:43 PM

CH

“ *Chrissy lit a candle in memory of Mary Idell Berrong*



Chrissy - August 20, 2014 at 11:41 AM