



Mary Elizabeth Peters Abernathy

October 28, 1938 - October 7, 2016

Mary Elizabeth Peters Abernathy died peacefully at her home in October 7, 2016. She was born on October 28, 1938 to Ervin M. and Rosalee McCulley Peters in Clarkrange, Tennessee. She was preceded in death by her parents, her brother and her husband, Judge Thomas Jerome Abernathy. Mary Elizabeth spent her elementary and high school years on the Cumberland Plateau. In 1961, she graduated from Tennessee Technological University with a degree in English Education. Later that year, she and Jerome were married and they lived in Knoxville for a year, at which time she began what would become a distinguished career in education. In 1962, they relocated to Nashville and she taught high school English in the Metropolitan Nashville system. In 1967, Jerome and Mary Elizabeth moved to Pulaski where she would continue to devote herself to her profession and her students for another 37 years- first at Jones High School in Lynnville, and ultimately at Giles County High School. There, she taught Senior English and became English Department Chairman and Drama Director. An impassioned anglophile, she thoroughly enjoyed her trips to England and Scotland as she thirsted in her life-long study of the history of the English language. A voracious reader, she relished her association with her literary club and the Friends of Giles County Public Library. Her relatives and friends are very grateful for the care and companionship of her dear friend Nadene White, particularly during her illness. A memorial service will be held at the Church of Messiah on Wednesday, October 12, 2016 at 1:00pm. In lieu of flowers,

remembrances may be made to the Giles County Public Library, 122 S. 2nd Street, or the Church of the Messiah, 114 N. 3rd Street, Pulaski, TN 38478. Bennett-May-Giles County Funeral Home is in charge of all arrangements for Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Peters Abernathy.

Tribute Wall

KJ

“ Sent a gift in memory of Mary Elizabeth Peters Abernathy

Karla Jenkinson - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

CJ

“ She was never my teacher, but we became friends as adults. We were in the literary club together, and there was a time when she and Jerome were frequent guests at the same dinner party. She was smart and funny and compassionate. She and Jerome were a wonderful pair who so enjoyed one another. I had the pleasure of knowing her mother and Jerome's mother as well. What an impact this woman had on all who knew her.

Claudia Kay Johnson - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

SF

“ Mrs. Abernathy was the sole reason I majored in English. She made me fall in love with Shakespeare and brought it to life for me. Her instruction in Shakespeare impacted me so much so that while some of my classmates were struggling with it in my college Shakespeare class, I was knocking it out of the park -- that was due to everything she taught me back at GCHS. Thank you Mrs. Abernathy for all that you've done for the students of Giles County. May you rest in heavenly peace.

Staci Franklin - Class of 1988

Staci Franklin - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

MB

“ I failed my 1st semester of Senior English, due to a lot of missed days. Make up work and make up hours seemed impossible to complete, as I also had hours and work for other teachers AND that 2nd semester's work to do...all while in my last trimester of pregnancy! She encouraged me by sitting and writing a schedule for me so I could accomplish everything. I'll never forget her for that!

Melinda Barber - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

AT

“ I was reminiscing about my time with her on Drama and as my senior English teacher. I learned to love the language because of her she is the reason I write for fun and pursued a degree as an English teacher. She is that teacher who touched my life in ways she never knew. I will forever be thankful for the influence she had on my education and life.

Angela Hood Tyson - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

LM

“ What an excellent english teacher and taught with such passion. R.i.p. Ms. Abernathy...

LaQuisha Myles-Heigh - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

BB

“ So very sorry to read this. My absolute favorite teacher from all my years in school. I relate Mary Elizabeth stories, anecdotes, and words of insightful wisdom to this day to a new generation of students. Very few have challenged me to be better than she did. Were I to have seen her in public even a month ago, I'd've still had a healthy fear of her! She was bad ass and that's how I'll always remember her.

Bryan E. Beets - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

“*Mary Elizabeth Abernathy was my father's high school AP English teacher as well as one of his dearest friends. But rather than to tell you all of the dry details of her life let me tell you about the Mary I knew.*

Mary was a strong, loud, boisterous woman. She was tall and broad and carried herself with the utmost dignity and class at all times.

Mary was an amazing cook and introduced me to so many different foods that I never would have tried otherwise.

Mary was intimidating at first. She was an intelligent and passionate woman with a stubborn pride indicative of her Scottish heritage. But if you could brave her overwhelming first impression you would find her to be the warmest, most loving person you could ever have the privilege to know.

Mary taught me so much about being a woman. She taught me that you never need to force yourself to be small or quiet - in fact quite the opposite. Because you are born a woman - I learned - you should be loud and bold. She taught me that an educated woman is one of the most ferocious and indomitable forces in the world. She taught me that a woman should always stand tall and proud in a room full of men. She taught me that you don't have to give birth to a child to be an amazing mother.

Mary taught me that love can last beyond death and you should never fear being alone. She survived her late husband for 25 years and never loved another man.

And I think the most important thing that Mary taught me was that family truly doesn't end with blood.

Mary Elizabeth Abernathy was a strong, intelligent, educated, warm, generous, compassionate, and intimidating woman. It is no exaggeration to say that she helped to shape me into the woman that I am today. When I was young I always believed that she was a queen. As I got older I realized that she truly was. She will be dearly

missed. Now and forever.

Candace Barnes - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

SE

“ *I wish I could have spoken to you one more time. You were a true inspiration to me although I caused you much grief , I always had respect. I definitely had my a\$\$ handed to me more than once. I couldn't have made it through 3 years of (Mrs Abernathy's) English without such a strong inspiration. Oh I learned to speak fluently, my punctuation still sucks. I did gain the desire to read more classics. Thank You for your time you will truly be missed..*

Stanley Evans

Stanley Evans - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

MB

“ *Mrs. Abernathy absolutely transformed my life. She taught us so much about thinking and analyzing and writing that I just couldn't quit. I became an English major in college and still pursue reading and writing as my greatest passions. You made the world a much, much richer place, Mary Elizabeth Abernathy. May you rest in peace and may you know you are cherished and your legacy lives on.*

Mary Nell Bryan - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

CJ

“ *This is lovely. She would be proud of your ability to capture her essence and express this. It made me laugh and cry. Thank you.*

Claudia Kay Johnson - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

BT

“ Drama class 76 -80 " I Do not care if a purple cow falls out of the sky-YOU WILL NOT BREAK CHARACTER'. She kept her character. With patience and tried at times..even with a cast that learned lines at twelfth hour-she pushed and fruits of her labor endure. God s Favorite. I know she knows this. Her show goes on.
Barbara Talman

barbara talman - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

NN

“ Mrs. Abernathy told me I had what it took to be a "great" writer, that I was good at expressing my thoughts. The few papers she didn't like she gave me the most honest criticism. I got along with all my English teachers. I'm really sorry to hear that she's gone. Mrs. Abernathy was a serious English teacher, but effective. My condolences to her family.
Jonathan Stevenson class of '04

Nyne Nina - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

MC

“ This news saddens me. The kids in Giles County have just lost one of their biggest advocates & inspirations. She genuinely cared for the kids she taught & loved her job. She wanted to do more than just teach, she wanted to inspire, & I truly believe she achieved that with a great many students. She was a wonderful person who will be deeply missed.

Mandy Collins - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

LC

“ She was my senior English teacher. I was never very good in that subject but she worked with me and because of her I passed and was 1st male in my family to get there diploma. A special lady.

Larry Cozart - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

ML

“ This was one of my fav teachers;after the fact. She taught me almost everything I know about Shakespeare and the literary classics. What she taught me in high school Honors English equipped me to be able to ace my Honors Shakespearean Literature course my Sophomore year in college. She was very demanding and held you to high expectations. She made drinking coffee all day long look regal. RIP Mrs Abernathy, gone but not forgotten.

Marchel Linza-Daniyan - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

JK

“ She was an amazing teacher and mentor. She was a huge catalyst for helping me get on track to make it to college during a difficult time in my life. She had an enormous amount of passion for her subject and her students. Thank you really isn't sufficient enough. I will forever be grateful. I pray that her family and friends find comfort during this difficult time.

Jessica Holley Krumel - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

FB

“ My dear friend of over 30 years, your support throughout my life has helped shape my entire being. I will miss your counsel, our laughter, and cheering for UT football. You have always been my second mother. Your passing has opened a void in my heart that may never be filled. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your life, and all the time, patience, and love you've shown me.

Frank Barnes - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

JG

“ Mrs. Abernathy was one of my favorite teachers in High School. That year I had been through a hard time with two friends dying, my brother in the hospital and on homebound for months, and then my older brother died. When I came back to school, Mrs. Abernathy had a beautiful card and flowers from my English class and her. It meant so much to me. She helped inspire me to become a teacher. She will be greatly missed.

Jodi Graham - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

DJ

“ She pushed me to take my time and write with intentions of someone else would be reading. At the time I did not grasp it all but I see what you are saying now and wish I could have told you thank you for what you taught me. Sincerely, Dr. James B. Angus, Jr.

Dr. James B. Angus, Jr. - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

CO

“ The day of English in my Sr. Year she gave me a great compliment. She was very impressed with my handwriting. She actually thought was a female writing. She asked ..who wrote this paper? I raised my hand and she was shocked that it was a male handwriting. Her statement was.. "Mr. Oaks this is beautiful handwriting and great communication. Keep it up.. and you will go far. That stuck with me...that was in 1979.

Chris Oaks - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM

TN

“ Her favorite saying, "Onward and Upward!"

Tim Nave - February 09, 2016 at 08:25 PM