



## Josephine "Jo" Ann Murray

December 11, 1934 - August 29, 2024

Josephine "Jo" Ann Murray, 89, of Rosenberg, Texas, passed away peacefully in the presence of loving family on August 29, 2024. She was a beautiful and loving mother, grandmother, teacher, and friend. A Celebration of Life ceremony will be held on October 14, 2024, at the Calvary Episcopal Church, 806 Thompson Road, Richmond, Texas, at 10:00 a.m.

Ms. Murray was born on December 11, 1934, in Rosebud, Texas, to the late Ida Ondrusek. The Ondrusek family eventually moved to Rosenberg, Texas, where Ms. Murray recalled, at five years of age, helping her stepfather, John Frank "Pappa" Valenta, deliver milk produced at the family's dairy farm door to door. She also learned to read "upside down" prior to entering elementary school due to Pappa Valenta reading the daily comic strips to her as she sat across the kitchen table. Upon completing elementary school, she enrolled in Lamar High School where she graduated with honors. Receiving the Elizabeth Hollis Kirkley Scholarship Award, she attended Sam Houston Teachers College, currently Sam Houston State University, where she majored in history while working as a caretaker for the Robinson family. In 1956, while enrolled at Sam Houston Teachers College, Ms. Murray received the Good Samaritan Award and was elected a member of Alpha Chi. This same year, she graduated Summa Cum Laude.

In 1957, she married Clyde Andrew Murray, a fellow student at Sam Houston Teachers College. In 1962, a daughter, Sarah Hollis Murray, was born in Corsicana, Texas. In 1964, the couple was blessed with a son, Andrew Keller

Murray, born in Phoenix, Arizona.

A consummate professional and an avid reader who never stopped acquiring knowledge, Ms. Murray's teaching career spanned more than 60 years. She drove a bookmobile for the Montgomery County Library, Conroe, Texas, during the late 1950's while working on her teaching certificate and later taught elementary school in Corsicana, Texas. In 1964, after the Murray family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, she co-owned a decoupage shop, Bernadette Studios, before acquiring teaching positions at Emerson Elementary School and, later, at Madison Rose Lane. During this period, she began working on her master's degree in education at Arizona State University, and her daughter fondly remembers Ms. Murray spending her weekends typing research papers on a manual typewriter with dozens of books spread throughout the dining room table. Ms. Murray went on to teach language arts and literature to gifted junior high school students at Madison #1. During this time, her summers were often spent travelling, primarily to Europe and Asia, as she felt these experiences, not only enjoyable, would enrich her knowledge – knowledge she could share with her students. In 1996, prior to retiring from Madison #1, the "Jo Murray Love of Literature Award" was established. The award is presented to Madison #1 students to this day.

After retirement, Ms. Murray moved to North Carolina where she lovingly helped care for her young grandchildren. After several years in North Carolina, she moved to Huntsville, Texas, where she embarked on a second teaching career at Mance Park Junior High School. Upon retiring from Mance Park, Ms. Murray, returning to her roots, settled in Rosenberg, Texas, where she enjoyed spending time with family, attending church, reading, gardening, and working on her needlepoint canvases. Again, missing her teaching career, she returned to her beloved profession serving as a substitute and mentor for the Lamar School District. Ms. Murray reluctantly ended her career at 85 years of age upon the arrival of the COVID pandemic.

Along with her precious family, Ms. Murray's students were the joy of her life. She talked fondly of her teaching experiences and of the knowledge and joy

she received from her career. She delighted in her students, and she had a gift of making children, as well as adults, feel special and loved. Ms. Murray's children recall, many times over the years, while shopping or at outdoor events, witnessing an excited student running toward their mother exclaiming joyfully, "Ms. Murray! Ms. Murray!" The student would always be met with a warm, loving smile and gracious conversation. Her children also recall their first memories of their mother were of being outrageously loved, and both have fond memories of their mother rocking them as small children while singing, "I love you, a bushel and a peck." The love she shared with her children and grandchildren was never-ending and continued throughout their adult lives. Her gentle and gracious manner, her beautiful smile, her generosity, and her love had a tremendous positive impact on those who were blessed to know her.

Ms. Murray spent her final years in Rosenberg attending the Calvary Episcopal Church, Richmond, where she volunteered in the community garden and, also, as "cookie lady" on Sundays after church service. An enthusiastic needlepoint artist, she participated in Calvary's Needlepoint Ministry, and she always looked forward to Thursday mornings meetings with her beloved "stitching group."

Imbued with a tremendous work ethic, Ms. Murray also loved to work outside with her plants and flowers. She recalled her first job, at 4 years of age, involved venturing out with her family in the early morning to weed the garden. At 89 years of age, several months prior to her passing, Ms. Murray continued her lifelong practice of venturing out among her flower gardens to enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

Ms. Murray was a beautiful and loving person, and she had a kind, generous, and beautiful heart. Her students, friends, and family all found joy in her presence and blossomed in the presence of her love. She preceded in death by her mother, Ida Ondrusek, her stepfather, John Frank Valenta, her sister, Emilie (Ondrusek) Lanier, and her brother, John Ondrusek. Survivors include

her children, Sarah Hollis Murray and Andrew Keller Murray; her grandchildren, Rachael Grace Murray, Meagan Ann (Murray) Ellis and her husband Brad Ellis, Skye Ariana Murray, and Jackson Edward Murray; her nephews, John Foster Ondrusek and his wife Anne, and Michael Ondrusek; her great-niece Heather (Ondrusek) Tavery and her husband Tony, and her great-nephew Michael Allen Ondrusek; along with numerous great-nieces, great-nephews, and great-great nieces, all of whom dearly love their Mom, “Grammie”, and “Aunt Jo.”

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

OCT **14**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Calvary Episcopal Church  
806 Thompson Road  
Richmond, TX 77469