



Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player

April 29, 1924 - July 8, 2019

BISHOPVILLE –Nellie Mae Kirby Player will be laid to rest at 3 PM on Saturday, July 13, 2019. Services will be held at Mount Zion Presbyterian Church, 4544 St. Charles Road on Highway 154, one half-mile south of the family home and surrounded by the fields of Nelle and her late husband Blain Player's beloved Pondville Farms. Mrs. Player's nephew, the Reverend Irvin Plowden Jr., a Methodist minister from Rock Hill, SC, will officiate. Local pastors will assist. Burial will follow at St. Luke Cemetery on S.C. Hwy. 341 between Bishopville and Lynchburg. Pallbearers: Bill Aston, Jeff Barton, Bert Beasley, Whit Player, Dan Plowden, James Rogers, JT Tolson, Steven Welsh

The family will receive friends from 4 to 6 p.m. on Friday, July 12 at Hancock-Elmore-Hill Funeral Home, Bishopville, and continuously at the family home.

Mrs. Player was a lifelong member of St. Luke United Methodist Church in Elliott and in later years as caregiving for her husband and age limited church attendance, she visited Elliott Baptist Church and Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church. Over the last decade she became a member of the Mt. Zion family. She loved them and they loved her. She held a special reverence and fondness for Reverend Jim Clark. The Sunday's she was able to visit were filled with joy and she made every effort to attend on the Holy Holidays and always dressed to impress.

Nelle Player, Known as NaeNae to her four grandchildren, died Monday, July 8, 2019. She was 95 years old, a goal she strived to reach. During her 94th year, when anyone asked about her age, with a wry smile she would respond, "I'm trying to make it to 95, because 95 just sounds better than 94!" By God's grace she reached that goal!

She was the daughter of the late Hazel and Marie Davis Kirby of Lynchburg; SC. Nelle graduated from Lynchburg High School and then Winthrop College in 1945 with a degree in Home Economics and Teaching. She had a warm affection for both these education institutions and attended reunions into her 90s. Nelle married her lifelong sweet heart Blain Player in 1950 in the midst of the joy of post WWII America. Having met through friends on a spontaneous Sunday drive, Blain asked Nelle to a Polo match in Camden the following day and a love blossomed creating a couple that balanced the strengths and weaknesses of each to produce a legacy that will extend far into the future.

Miss Nelle was a teacher at heart whether in a formal or informal setting. She served as a HomeEc and Elementary School teacher for several decades before becoming a full-time farm wife and mother helping the family to operate Player's Pondville Farms. In 1979, Nelle and Blain's family was named S.C. Master Farm Family – a reflection of Nelle's skill and devotion as a farm wife and mother. During the selection visit for this award Nelle expressed to the committee that "She believed her greatest crop was her children." A belief reflected in each of her three adult children Marie, Pete and Kirby.

At St. Luke Nelle served as a Sunday School Teacher and coordinated youth activities for nearly 50 years. She employed all her teaching skills to create meaningful Sunday school lessons, Christmas pageants, Vacation Bible Schools and community service projects. Miss Nelle always filled these events with fun, inspiration, delicious snacks and Biblical lessons appropriate for the age of each child. In days gone by, some residents of the county would

exclaim that “St. Luke Christmas pageants are the stuff of legend – you never know what might happen!”

Immersed in community service, Nelle was an active member and fulfilled leadership roles with the Lee Gardeners Garden Club and the Pee Dee District Garden Clubs of SC; SC and Lee County Farm Bureau Federation Woman’s Committee; SC Master Farm Homemakers Guild, SC Soil Conservation Ladies Auxiliary; Lee County Historical Society; Lee County Library Board; and the Lee County Arts Council. In addition, she was a longtime advisor for the Lee County Soil Conservation Youth Commissioners and a Girl Scout Troop Leader in her younger years in Lynchburg, SC.

A lady of tradition, Nelle was renowned for practicing hospitality in her lovely farm home on the hill at Pondville Farms. For decades the meals, parties and activates hosted at Pondville were memorable, meaningful and punctuated with southern delicacies that enticed many cooks to say, “May I have the recipe?” Nelle and Thelma “Coot” Rogers, Nellie’s life-long friend and workmate, were considered some of the best cooks in all Lee County. Those who placed their feet under Nelle and Coot’s table or gathered for a Clemson, hunting or Carolina Cup tailgate enjoyed bountiful servings of Fried Chicken and Biscuits, Grilled Chicken and mashed potatoes with Sunday Bullets (Le Sueur peas Petite Green Peas), Chicken Pot Pie, Chicken Salad, Baked and Fried Fish, Fried Quail and Yellow Cheese Grits, Meat Loaf, Turkey and Corn Bread Dressing, Cranberry Jeweled Jell-O Salad, Greens and Cornbread, Field Peas, Rice and Gravy, Cole Slaw, Potato Salad, Squash Casserole and numerous other dishes. These meats and sides were complimented with mouthwatering desserts like NaeNae’s Nut Cookies, Yellow Sheet Cake with NaeNae’s Secret Ingredient Chocolate Icing, Fruit Cake, 22 Minute Cake, Homemade Ice Cream, and many other Chocolate Delicacies! These meals were served in an environment that was clean, warm and inviting thanks to

the domestic skills that these two matriarchs employed. Their work ethic saw the two laboring together with melodious chatter before the sun rose ensure a successful Clemson Football game tailgate or long after midnight to clean and put away the party fare after a wedding party, baby shower, birthday or holiday family gathering or some other joyous celebration.

Over the years many extended family members, guests and friends near and far called Pondville home away from home. As scripture acknowledges, through her love and generosity to the least of these, Nelle and Coot may have served “Angels unaware!” If one were to encapsulate Nelle’s life into a phrase it would be: Servant-Leader and loving caregiver.

Not only was beauty, warmth and a welcoming sense of hospitality expressed inside the walls of the family home, the grounds and gardens of Pondville were an expression of Nelle’s love of flowers and gardening and her desire to be a faithful steward of God’s creation as expressed in the opening chapters of Genesis. The expanse of acres that she, Coot and a parade of farm hands Nelle “stole” from the field to assist with manicuring the yard before an event, installing a new garden bed or performing regular maintenance on the flower beds, trees, grounds or vegetable gardens she designed and maintained was as Coot called it – “Miss Nelle’s PLEASURE!” Though not matching in scale or grandeur, these efforts, booked ended by the small and big pond that give Pondville its name, produced an effect that welcomed everyone to this country sanctuary in a fashion as magnificent as the approach road and surrounding grounds of Biltmore House and Gardens. The blooms and greenery from the grounds also graced church alters, wedding venues, tables for special events, hospital rooms and the homes of neighbors and friends as Nelle willingly shared the fruits of her labor. And speaking of fruits and vegetables: The aforementioned tables of Nelle and Coot were often supplied with the bounty of Blain and Nelle’s vegetable gardens and fruit trees. Pondville’s kitchen counters always held a patchwork quilt of clear mason jars containing vibrant

colors of preserved produce that included shades of greens, reds, yellows, oranges and browns with specs of spiced coloring that included: Pickle varieties like Crystal, Bread and Butter, Whole and Relished Artichoke; Vegetables like Stewed Tomatoes and Canned Green Beans; flavorful spreads for biscuits or breads like Peach, Crabapple and Blackberry Jelly and an occasional “experimental” treat as Nelle called them. Similarly the freezer busted at the seams with the ingredients for fall and winter feasts that were harvested, cleaned, prepped and preserved in a full-day marathon that engaged the countless hands and hearty fellowship and laughter of farm help and nearby neighbors preparing sweet corn on and off the cob; field peas, okra, butter beans, yellow summer crookneck squash, Sugared Figs (a technique learned from Blain’s mother Elizabeth), blueberries and other garden bounty. Whenever they could Nelle and Blain shared their personal passions for the art and science of agriculture and horticulture. Through involvement in Garden Club and Clemson Extension Programs, combined with her innate skills for teaching, Nelle instructed, inspired and launched many a budding gardener to get dirt under their finger nails. One can conclude that it is no accident that the Player’s son Pete and granddaughter Kayla work diligently everyday of the year in the challenging career of farming to provide food and fiber to this world while daughter Marie is the Garden Manager at the local Jared’s Ace Hardware. Though time, age and culture eventually produced a sun setting process on this aspect of Nelle’s life, she never lost the passion. As she expressed to a dear cousin just a year ago, “I just want to go dig a hole in the yard and plant something!” Nelle, like her husband Blain, was a “Tiller and Keeper of the Land” that loved nothing more than to watch something grow and that included other people’s desire to toil in the soil.

A member of the Greatest Generation, in all she did Nelle employed thrift, creativity, character, intentionality and Christian principles that encompassed the “Golden Rule” and demonstrated the belief that the most important possession you will ever own is your reputation and good name! Thus, Nelle’s

goal was excellence with clear detail in all she did.

Mrs. Player was predeceased by her husband of 57 years, C. B. (Blain) Player, Jr. and a sister, Lillian (W.D) Arrants of Lexington, SC; surviving are children, Marie Player (Jake) Smith, Cleland Blain "Pete" (Marie) Player, both of Bishopville, and Weber Kirby Player (Marilyn) of Clemson; Brother Davis H. Kirby and sister Jean K. (Irvin) Plowden of Rock Hill; and grandchildren, Bryan Smith, Kayla Player, Paul Smith and Kyle Player.

The family offers special thanks to the late Thelma "Coot" Rogers, lifelong family friend and faithful caregiver. The family is also grateful to the many medical and caregiving professionals who assisted the family during Nelle's aging process. Special thanks go to Dr. Oscar Lovelace & his staff; caregivers Rosa Richardson, Peggy Morrow, Elouise Wright, Geraldine Anderson & Thelma Bonham.

No one walks the paths of life alone and The Player family acknowledges that the quality and quantity of Nelle and Blain's lives in later years is a DIRECT REFLECTION of the love, care, skill and Christ like service of the names acknowledged above. Likewise the healing power of encouragement from those who practice "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is a wondrous gift: Nelle & Blain both regularly received this gift from their faithful friends & St. Charles community neighbors Archie & Anna Chandler, Mary Josey and the late Betty Atkinson & Lila Mae Welsh. Their consistent ministry of presence & laughter consoled and enriched this season for the entire Player family.

In addition as this loving couple aged, the family cannot forget and offers a heartfelt thank you to the many family, friends and neighbors that created joy by their visits, cards, food, gifts, phone calls and continuous appeals to God in prayer to shed grace upon our family. Our gratitude overflows.

To God be the glory great things He hath done so loved He the world that He gave us His son.

May we each pray – “Father God, you have given us so many rich blessings, today we ask you for one more – A Grateful Heart!”

Memorials may be made to St. Luke Cemetery c/o Molly Moore, 60 Bradley Road, Bishopville, SC 29010.

The family wishes to thank the staff at Hancock-Elmore-Hill Funeral Home for their kind service and friendship.

Cemetery Details

St Luke United Methodist Church Cemetery

1030 Lynchburg Highway
Elliott, SC 29046

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 12. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Hancock-Elmore-Hill Funeral Home
200 West Church Street
Bishopville, SC 29010

Service

JUL 13. 3:00 PM (ET)

Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church
4544 St Charles Rd
Bishopville, SC 29010

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*

October 08, 2023 at 04:16 PM



“ *Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*

March 25, 2023 at 11:01 AM



“ *Virginia Rogers lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Virginia Rogers - July 15, 2019 at 05:12 PM



“ *2 files added to the album Order of Service*



Steve Winburn - July 12, 2019 at 09:08 AM

VN

“ Vivian & Timothy Nichols lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player



Vivian & Timothy Nichols - July 12, 2019 at 06:07 AM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player.



July 11, 2019 at 02:30 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player.



July 11, 2019 at 01:19 PM



“ Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player.



July 11, 2019 at 10:59 AM

RC

“ *Rebecca Crichton lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Rebecca Crichton - July 11, 2019 at 09:44 AM

PB

“ *Patsy Baker lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Patsy Baker - July 11, 2019 at 01:56 AM

TO

“ *Tommy lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Tommy - July 10, 2019 at 09:12 PM

TD

Pete, Marie and Kirby, I'm so sorry to hear of the passing of "Miss Nellie." Know that your families are in my thought and prayers.

Tommy Dampier - July 10, 2019 at 09:15 PM

LK

“ *Linda Kellenbbenz lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



linda kellenbbenz - July 10, 2019 at 04:20 PM

RR

“ *Rhonda Raley lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Rhonda Raley - July 10, 2019 at 03:05 PM

CM

“ *Clara McElveen lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Clara McElveen - July 10, 2019 at 12:41 PM

CM

To the family of Nelle Player, I send my deepest sympathy. She was a lady who was loved by so many. I'm so glad I visited her about a month ago and carried her a Coffee Cake. I enjoyed my visit with her and her daughter Marie. May God give each of you comfort, strength and peace in the loss of one so precious..

Clara McElveen - July 10, 2019 at 12:44 PM

DP

To Nelle Player's family: I love the way you loved her. That is absolutely the greatest tribute you could ever have given her. So very sorry for your loss.

Dorothy Pilgrim - July 11, 2019 at 11:46 PM

LB

“ *Lee Brunson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Lee Brunson - July 10, 2019 at 10:13 AM

MB

“ *Matt Bramlett lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Matt Bramlett - July 10, 2019 at 07:35 AM

CC

“ *Cheryl O. Cole lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player*



Cheryl O. Cole - July 10, 2019 at 06:10 AM



“ Iris Hayes lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Nelle Kirby Player



Iris Hayes - July 09, 2019 at 11:30 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Hancock-Elmore-Hill Funeral Home - July 09, 2019 at 02:37 PM



She was a very Sweet Lady always had that smile,so sorry

Dale W Uggiano - July 10, 2019 at 11:52 AM



*Thinking of all of you as we celebrate Nelle's life. Nelle had so much influence on my life about "how to live what to do and how to be". She was a patient, wonderful teacher and never stopped teaching us not matter how old we got. We all laughed and had such good times each year as we celebrated another year in her life. And each year she gave us a home project to take home. She reminded us to Count Our Blessings and having her as a teacher and friend was certainly one.
Mary Martha Richardson, Clemson*

Mary Martha Richardson - July 11, 2019 at 01:56 PM