



## Mable Kathleen Bates Taylor

August 17, 1923 - January 14, 2021

Mable Kathleen Bates Taylor, 97, died January 14, 2021. Born August 17, 1923, Mable was the youngest of eight children of the late John Francis Cordelia (J.C.) (“Kirk”) Bates and Mary LouAnna Coble Bates, lifelong residents of the Beaverdam community. She was preceded in death by her husband James R. (J.R.) Taylor, Jr., retired Hickman County barber (Taylor’s Barber Shop) and farmer, and sons Homer Taylor and Ronnie Taylor. She was a member of Brushy Church of Christ. She was active in collecting local records and history as well as researching the genealogies of her Bates, Coble and Peeler ancestors. Talented and hardworking, Mable sewed, canned, milked cows and raised tobacco. Like many of her generation, Mable was an excellent “scratch” cook known especially for her grape jelly rolls that started with the Concord grapes grown in her backyard, rhubarb pies, pear preserves, freezer slaw, cornbread cornsticks, pecan pie and, her favorite, coconut cake. She saw beauty in everything in the world around her and was especially alert for an unusual rock or pretty leaf while working in the garden and fields or walking across the pastures. Her yard always had something blooming. She had a can-do attitude from a lifetime of hearing her parents say and later repeating it herself: “Able Mable can do anything.”

When Mable was 12, her mother “had a stroke two weeks before school was out. Neighbors came in and took care of Mother so I could graduate 8th grade.” Mable had walked eight years to school at Crossroads Elementary, then a grades 1-thru-8 one-room school near the Wade-Peeler Cemetery, off West Beaverdam, where Mable’s parents, four grandparents and most other family members are buried. (Wade-Peeler Cemetery was started by “Kirk” Bates maternal grandfather, Jesse Roscoe Christopher Peeler, originally from Rowan County, N.C., and Robert Wade, along the border of their adjoining farms to bury members of their families.) For the next four years Mable was her mother’s caregiver plus she cooked, milked cows, raised a garden, canned, and performed every other task expected of a farm woman in the mid-1930s. Her mother died of a heart attack when Mable was 16. Mable then worked at Centerville’s “shirt factory.” She subsequently moved to Columbia with her niece Bernice Mayberry Baker. Mable worked testing milk at Tuell Dairy Co., then located in Columbia. For the rest of her life, she happily recalled living and working in Columbia before and during World War II as well as after her marriage.

Married December 22, 1945, to James R. (J.R.) Taylor, Jr., they spent their honeymoon in the Peabody Hotel, Memphis. Mable recounted the Duck Meister ushering the ducks from the elevator every morning and across the lobby into the fountain where they swam until night when he marched them across the lobby into the elevator and up to their duck house atop the hotel. J.R. had just completed Memphis Academy of Barbering to be a Master Barber. Mable was to catch the 4 a.m. early morning bus to Memphis where J.R. would meet the bus and they'd get married. Mable's clock didn't go off, so she woke late. She hurriedly dressed and called a cab to chase down the bus. Carl Baker, then recently married to Mable's niece, Bernice Mayberry Baker, teased Mable about it for the rest of his life. Whenever he was around her, he'd always sing Roy Acuff's, "Take that Night Train to Memphis." Mable's Michigan sister Ruby Pierce loved to tease Mable about how she kept hearing how the new neighbor family's son was so good to come over and sit with their dad, "Kirk." "Then first thing I know he's engaged to my baby sister!" Their engagement was a topic of other family conversations. Mable's brother Ernest Bates's children were discussing whether it would be Uncle J.R. and Aunt Mable Bates or Taylor after they were married. Albert Ray Bates had the answer: "If Uncle J.R. buys the (marriage) license, it will be Taylor. But if Aunt Mable buys the license, it will be Bates."

As a child, Mable and her next oldest sister, Lucy Bates Johnston, played "house" on the rocks above Beaverdam Creek just north of the Highway 100 bridge just west of that intersection. They had "upstairs" and "downstairs." However, Mable said their mother would never let them play IN the creek because polio was rampant (until advent of the Salk Polio vaccine in 1955) and their mother was always afraid someone upstream might have polio. After Mable broke her hip at age 91, she would fondly recall her home and early childhood and "wish Mother would come because I miss all my cousins." (Following the death of Rutha Harris Coble, William Jackson "Jack" Coble had lived with his daughter Mary LouAnna and her husband "Kirk" with Mary LouAnna thereafter hosting the Coble extended-family gatherings which Mable enjoyed recalling.)

After a couple years of marriage and with an infant daughter, J. R. went for a post-World War II military service exam where he was told by Army doctors that a growth on his eye had grown more rapidly and would leave him blind when it reached the cornea. Deciding that he "could farm blind," Mabel and he left Columbia where he was barbering and moved in with his parents on their Beaverdam farm while J.R. built a house for them next door. (Many decades later and before the growth reached the cornea, medical science had progressed to the point that the growth could be removed, and he never went blind.) J.R. hand built the house with only a hammer, handsaw and hand plane, digging the half basement/cellar under the house with a mule and a turning plow. He and Mable lived there and farmed all but the first two years of their 69-year marriage. Asked why they built the house so close to the road, Mable said "there weren't two cars a day went by then" when they had selected the building site. The home is on a portion of the farm his parents

bought when TVA took their West Tennessee River-bottom farm as part of the impoundment of Kentucky Lake behind the dam at Gilbertsville, Ky., forcing his parents to relocate. They were friends of O.J. Lynn, ASCS agent in Houston County. When Lynn was reassigned to Hickman County, he remained in touch with the Taylors. When TVA was evacuating everyone from what is now the Land Between the Lakes area, Lynn wrote Ralph Taylor about a farm coming up for auction in Hickman County. Ralph bought the farm at auction from Hartie Lee Coble and his wife. The Taylor-Lynn friendship continued and when genealogy became popular in the 1980s, Mable Taylor collaborated with Mrs. Lynn doing research for the compilation of Hickman County Cemeteries and other local historical research.

With the house built and farming, J.R. went back to work barbering, first in Hohenwald, then Centerville and eventually building his own barbershop, Taylor's Barbershop, beside their house.

Until the bottom fell out of the hog market, Mable and J.R. raised registered Hampshire hogs. They also bought the portion of the "old John Bates farm" where the John Bates Cemetery is located and where some of Mable's ancestors are buried. There they raised registered polled Hereford cattle, a tobacco allotment, alfalfa for hay and pasture and corn for their feeder pig operation.

Born at home, Mable was certainly a survivor, ingeniously kept alive by floating her in a dishpan in a cast-iron wash kettle full of water which was kept just the right temperature by someone tending the fire under it 24 hours a day. As an adult her oldest sister, Irrie Bates (Connie) Mayberry would tease her that "We should have let the fire go out; it sure was hard to court with a baby crying in the house!" Age 2, Mable said she fell ill, became severely dehydrated, "and they'd already laid me out on the front porch when Miss Minnie Belle (Beakley Bates) heard the dinner bell ringing, which was what they did then when somebody died. She came running up the creek barefoot and started working with me and got me to breathing again. I used to hide when I'd see her because she told that every time she saw me."

Mable was born in the first house on the right side of what is now Hwy 100 just west of the intersection of Highways 48 S and 100 W. After the new Highway 100 was built, bisecting the "Kirk" Bates farm, "Kirk" built a general store at the new intersection. He built a blacksmith shop behind it and at different times Mr. Will Shepard and Charlie Harris were blacksmiths there. Mable's mother, LouAnna, ran the store. Mable loved to tell how her mother "always had something good to say about everybody. When a good-for-nothing old man in the community died, everybody rushed to the store to be there when she heard he'd died to see what she could find good to say about him. She said, 'Well.....He sure could whistle.'"

When “Kirk” decided he wanted a car, there were few places to buy gasoline, so he added gasoline pumps at the front of the store: a blacksmith shop behind the store and gasoline pumps in front. Mable would recall how that Model A car couldn’t climb a hill: “When we’d go to see Aunt Sis Rivers and we’d come to a hill; we’d all get out so he could back it over the hill. Then we would all get back in and go on.” (To the next hill, anyway.) He extended credit to whomever needed it, especially during the Depression. After his legs were amputated due to diabetes in the 1950s, his many visitors included some who owed him money from the general store he had since sold. During a visit, those visitors would sometimes give him a quarter or half dollar “to pay on my bill.” He’d take the coin and reach for a huge ledger accounts book that was typical of the day, so they’d see him “mark it down.” Often after they’d left he’d say to Mable, “They’re never going to get all that paid off; but it makes them feel good to pay something on it, so I always make sure they see me mark it down.” (After his death, they destroyed the ledger books.) The Milan Cemetery was originally also part of the “Kirk” Bates farm, which he’d deeded to the community. In addition to her parents, husband and sons, she was preceded in death by seven siblings: Irrie Frances Ruth (Connie) Mayberry, Sarah Beulah (Rev. Carnell) Shepard, Emmitt Joe Kirklin Bates, Claude Everette Bates, Ernest Walker (Annie Laura Pierce) Bates, Ruby (Jack) Pierce, and Lucy Bell (Grover) Johnston.

Survived by daughter Anne (Danny) Powell, Oak Ridge; grandchildren: Harber (Richard) Ingle, Oak Ridge; Nathaniel (Heather) Powell, Knoxville; Conrad (Danielle) Powell, Oak Ridge; Brandon (Rebecca) Taylor, Lawrenceburg; Jennifer (Michelle) Taylor, Dickson; Amber (Garrett) Gordon, Centerville; Laura Taylor, Hohenwald; and 17 great-grandchildren including Mabel Powell; 3 step-great-grandchildren; 2 step-great-great-granddaughters, 6 nieces and nephews and many great-nieces and great-nephews. Special thanks to staff of Briarcliff Diversicare of Oak Ridge for her care, especially her CNA Angel Thompson, who was there the day Mable arrived. Polite and appreciative to those taking care of her, Mable was “our little Mable” to devoted nursing staff.

Graveside viewing, visitation and services will be 12:30 p.m., Saturday, January 23 at Milan Cemetery, Bill McDonald officiating.

In compliance with the Governor’s Executive Order No. 17 (Covid 19), Covid safe protocols for masks and social distancing will be in place and adhered to enabling older relatives and friends and others to attend in safety.

McDonald’s Funeral Home, Centerville, is in charge.

# Cemetery

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**Milan**

Centerville, TN, 37033

# Events

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**JAN 23 Graveside Service 12:30PM**

**23**

Milan

Centerville, TN, US, 37033

**JAN 23 Visitation 12:30PM**

**23**

Milan

Centerville, TN, US, 37033

# Comments

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“ Betty Love lit a candle in memory of Mable Kathleen Bates Taylor



**Betty Love** - January 19 at 04:02 PM

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“ Randall-Sandra Barber lit a candle in memory of Mable Kathleen Bates Taylor



**Randall-Sandra Barber** - January 19 at 03:16 PM

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“ Mary Grimes McNabb lit a candle in memory of Mable Kathleen Bates Taylor



**Mary Grimes McNabb** - January 19 at 03:10 PM

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“ Beautiful lady and so many wonderful memories  
Larry and Carolyn King



Larry and Carolyn King - January 19 at 02:39 PM

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“ Jennifer Talley lit a candle in memory of Mable Kathleen Bates Taylor



Jennifer Talley - January 19 at 01:01 PM

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“ What a Glorious life. Love to her family.

Joyce Mayberry - January 19 at 11:49 AM