



Dr. Loreta Faye Holder-Brown

June 23, 1931 - March 6, 2019

Dr. Loreta Faye O'Neal Holder-Brown, age 87, of Conway, Arkansas, passed away peacefully attended by loved ones at home, Wednesday, March 6, 2019. She was the widow of Edmund Ray "Charlie" Brown.

Born Loreta Faye O'Neal in Gravel Hill, Arkansas, on Tuesday, June 23, 1931, she was the eldest daughter of Doyle Clyde and Elmas Athea (Rhoads) O'Neal, and the grand-daughter of John Houston and Savannah Evelyn O'Neal, and James Houston and Mary Elnora Rhoads. She was raised with a strong Baptist faith which stood her in good stead all her life. In 1947, she married James Richard (Buster) Holder, first living in Morrilton, Arkansas then moving to Oregon, where in 1952 she gave birth to the first of their two children, a daughter, Terri Lynn. In 1956, they were blessed with a son, Doyle Kenton.

A life-threatening bout of Polio at the age of 4, and the subsequent loss of the use of her left arm inspired in Loreta a lifelong commitment to improving the lives of children with disabilities. At the age of 16 she was awarded her teacher's certificate and began teaching elementary school in the Springfield public school. She went on to attend Arkansas State Teachers' College in Conway, Arkansas, earning her Bachelor's Degree in Education, then her Master's Degree in Special Education from George Peabody College in Memphis, Tennessee, and finally a Doctorate of Educational Psychology from Southern Illinois University, and became Professor Emerita of Special Education at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa in 1973. At a time when

few women built careers or aspired to advanced degrees of higher learning, she did both while supporting and raising a family.

In 1975 she met her lifelong partner and future husband, “Charlie” Brown, and together they built a life benefitting countless children, as well as the communities in which they lived.

Recognizing the importance of early intervention, in 1974 Dr. Holder-Brown founded the innovative RISE Center at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, one of only a handful of experimental programs to win federal grant moneys to provide crucial therapies to special needs infants and support services to their families. RISE has since grown to seven facilities based in major US cities in four states and provides hundreds of children with vital services yearly, enabling them to enter and flourish in the classrooms of mainstream schools all over the country. Dr. Holder-Brown impacted dozens of lives through her doctoral program, and hundreds more through a tiny infant day-school program started in a basement, conceived and directed by her, and funded through grants she wrote.

Dr. Holder-Brown worked tirelessly as an advocate for the disabled, and was a constant champion of Tuscaloosa’s disabled community, working in programs such as Tuscaloosa WACS.

Retiring from the University of Alabama in 1993, she returned to her Alma Mater, Arkansas State Teachers’ College, which had grown into the University of Central Arkansas, where she taught in the field of early childhood development and special education, and reestablished her home in Central Arkansas.

As Dr. Holder-Brown was considering a second retirement she and Charlie Brown founded Mission HELP as an outreach support for orphanages and neonatal hospitals in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, where they supported and resupplied a neonatal intensive care unit and established and funded programs to train childcare providers to treat physically disabled children.

RISE Schools of Tuscaloosa, Austin, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Huntsville, and Stillwater, and Mission HELP of Honduras (now a part of the Friends of

Barnabas outreach) stand as a testament to the heart Dr. Holder-Brown had for children and the tenacity with which she pursued her vision.

Loreta spent her retirement years advocating for and directly supporting the Mission she and Charlie Brown created and funded, and enjoying seeing her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow. She was blessed with a long life, never squandering a moment, but constantly pursuing her calling - to improve the conditions of lives impacted by disability. Though she earned awards and accolades too great to list, her true legacy lives on in the children she loved and supported all her life.

Loreta is survived by her daughter, Terri York of Holland, Arkansas; her son, Kent Holder and wife, Shawna, of Conway, Arkansas; grandchildren, Rusti Barger and husband, David, of Quitman, Arkansas, Devin O'Neal York and wife, Krista, of Cave Junction, Oregon, Riley O'Neal Holder and wife, Toi, of San Diego, California, Destiny Branscum and husband, Ethaen, Serenity, Avery, and Amity Holder, all of Conway; great-grandchildren, Ashlee, Lane (Lillie), Arin, Duncan, Sameah, and Clair Barger; a great-great-granddaughter, Rosalee; brother, Jerry O'Neal and wife, Ruth; sister, Nell Miller and husband, Don; brother, Jimmy O'Neal and wife, Dorothy, all of Cleveland, Arkansas.

Loreta was also blessed with a host of nieces and nephews whom she loved dearly, as well as countless friends whom she counted among her greatest blessings.

Funeral services will be held 10:00 am Saturday, March 9, at Cleveland Baptist Church, with Rick Miller officiating. Burial will be at Old Liberty Cemetery, with Harris Funeral Home of Morrilton. The family will receive friends from 6:00 to 8:00 pm Friday at Harris Chapel. In lieu of flowers, it was Loreta's wish that donations be made to RISE School of Tuscaloosa, c/o Kent Holder, 620 Whispering Wind Circle, Conway, AR 72034.

Cemetery Details

Old Liberty Cemetery

229 Dawn Rd.
Cleveland, AR 72030

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 8. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Harris Funeral Homes - Morrilton
1325 Oak St
Morrilton, AR 72110
(501) 354-4575

Funeral Service

MAR 9. 10:00 AM (CT)

Cleveland Missionary Baptist Church
9 Church Rd.
Cleveland, AR 72030

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Loreta Faye Holder-Brown*

January 30, 2023 at 02:08 AM



“ *I'm so sorry to hear of your loss. I knew the moment I met her that she was an extra special woman! We became friends immediately. I'm so glad our paths crossed and pray the Lord comforts you during this time.*

Christie Paladino - March 10, 2019 at 09:34 AM



“ *Susann DuVall lit a candle in memory of Dr. Loreta Faye Holder-Brown*



Susann DuVall - March 09, 2019 at 10:14 AM



Our deepest symapthy to all of you we loved Loreta and Charlie Brown they were two of the greatest people of always helping others loe you all special love to TERRI AND KENT and their families.

Susann DuVall - March 09, 2019 at 10:18 AM

CM

“ Carolyn Mills lit a candle in memory of Dr. Loreta Faye Holder-Brown



Carolyn Mills - March 08, 2019 at 08:18 PM

LS

“ Dr. Loreta Holder was my college advisor at UCA in 1965, colleague and friend who I will miss. She encouraged and supported me to serve children with physical and learning challenges and their families through special education services for over forty years. Thank you Loreta. My thoughts and prayers are with the family during this time of great loss.



Lynn Springfield - March 08, 2019 at 04:12 PM

SF

“ So sorry for the family's loss. Prayers for you all.
Shirley and Hollis Frye

Shirley and Hollis Frye - March 08, 2019 at 02:16 PM

JO

“ She was a good friend that will be miss but I will see her in gory.
Jimmy Osmore Tuscaloosa Alabama

Jimmy Osmore - March 08, 2019 at 09:26 AM

BB

“ SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILY OF LORETA BROWN ONE OF OUR BEST FRIENDS WHOM WE LOVED SO MUCH. WE HAD MANY GOOD TIMES TOGETHER WITH HER AND CHARLIE BROWN. CHARLIE BROWN WAS MY HUSBANDS FIRST COUSIN. WE ARE BOTH DISABLED TO COME TO SERVICES AS WAS TRUE WHEN CHARLIE PASSED AWAY. I TALKED TO LORETA ON THE PHONE UNTIL SHE GOT WORSE THIS PAST YEAR. WE WILL ALWAYS HAVE OUR MEMORIES OF LORETA AND CHARLIE IN OUR HEART. PRAYERS FOR ALL. GOD BLESS EACH ONE OF YOU. LOVE BOY AND JEANETTE BROWN.

BOY AND JEANETTE BROWN - March 08, 2019 at 12:02 AM



“ *Dearest One Casket Insert was purchased for the family of Dr. Loreta Faye Holder-Brown.*



March 07, 2019 at 04:47 PM