



# Mary Beth McCalla

FEB 4, 1922 - MAY 15, 2020



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# Mary Beth McCalla

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## Mary McCalla Obituary

Mary Beth Hartson Ryan McCalla passed away peacefully May 15, 2020 after celebrating her 98th birthday with friends and family at Kendal at Oberlin, where she had lived for the last 20 years. Mary was born February 4, 1922 in Grinnell, Iowa, the youngest of three children (Robert and Dorothy Helen) of Louis Dunton Hartson and Mary Reed Hartson. The family moved to Oberlin when her father joined the Oberlin College faculty and she attended Oberlin schools, graduating from Oberlin College in 1943. Mary then earned a “Certificate in Business” from Radcliffe College. In those days young women could not enroll in the Harvard Business School, but because so many young men were serving in the military, the Harvard “B” school professors crossed the river and taught the “girls”. Her business training included apprenticeships in New York at Time Magazine and with Halle Brothers in Cleveland. Toward the end of World War II, she joined the Club Programs for the American Red Cross in the European theater (Italy) and while managing the Red Cross Club in Venice, met both her first and second husbands. In 1946 she married Robert A. Ryan, a first lieutenant in 88th Infantry/US Army. As an army wife Mary lived in Italy, Germany, Washington, DC, Columbus, GA, Towson, MD and on the campus of West Point Military Academy. After Robert separated from military service, she lived in Hope Valley, NY, near Northville, a small town in the Adirondack Mountains. During those Adirondack years she learned to expect bears in the meadow and to live with spring floods and winter nights when the temperature dropped to as much as 40 degrees below zero. She revived the skiing skills she had learned in 1933 Germany when her family spent a sabbatical year in Vienna and she and her brother studied at a boarding school in the Bavarian Alps. In addition to teaching her children to ski, she was a gardener, a knitter, a Brownie and Girl Scout troop leader and earned a second graduate degree, a MAT in Education. She taught



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in Wells, NY and then, following family moves, lived and taught in Middletown, NJ, Clarkson, ON (Canada) and Sarasota, FL. Mary and her family spent their summers sailing. It was a common weekend adventure to cross Lake Ontario from Oakville, ON to the Niagara River, a 30-mile journey. In 1968, Mary and her husband, Bob and daughter Mimi sailed their 1930's vintage wooden sloop from Annapolis, MD to Ft. Lauderdale, FL. This six-week journey down the Intracoastal Waterway included a rescue by the coast guard and a "minor" hurricane. During quieter days aboard, Mary home-schooled Mimi. After her divorce from Robert, Mary had a fairy tale romance and second marriage. Donald McCalla, who had fallen in love with Mary in 1946 in Venice, but who had kept his love to himself for many years, reached out and found Mary after he himself was widowed. In 1976, she married Don and moved to his home, Sidney, OH, where she resided for 24 years until Don's death. While in Sidney Mary helped found a chapter of Planned Parenthood, which cost her any opportunities to continue teaching, but brought her great satisfaction. Mary was often described as sweet and kind, but her respect for others did not lessen her commitment to the rights of women, often reminding people that her own mother had only been able to vote for the first time right before Mary was born. Mary was very active in the American Association of University Women including serving as president of her local chapter. She also took up master's swimming and competed regularly and successfully in the Senior Olympics. At Don's death Mary returned to Oberlin. While at Kendal Mary was very active with the RAF shop and in early years enjoyed biking around the campus and town she loved. In later years, even as her memory began to fail, she spent hours completing jigsaw puzzles and remained a competitive bridge player, posting many winning scores, most often when partnered with niece Kathy. Mary and Robert had 3 children, all of whom survive: Mary Elizabeth "Liz" Ryan Cole (Charles) of Thetford, VT, Robert A. "Bob" Ryan (Joan Mariani) of Berwick, ME, Emily Alice "Mimi" Ryan (Gus Zeising) of Burlington, VT, and stepdaughter Cindy McCalla and granddaughter Aimee Campbell of Mansfield, OH. She is also survived by grandchildren, Noah (Meredith) of Portland, OR, Ethan (Suzanne) of Lebanon, NH, Audrey (Ricky) of Bristol, VT, Thomas and Adrian of Rockport, ME, Silas (Esther) of Oakland, CA, Jonas (Madeline) of Thetford, VT; great-



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grandchildren, Lindsey, Augustus, Eben, Sabine, Liam and Mikko; three cousins, two nephews and three nieces, including Kathy Caldwell who has been her neighbor and friend at Kendal. If there were one quote she might want to make certain we all kept in mind it would probably be, "Two wrongs don't make a right." In addition to a private family memorial, a Zoom based memorial will be held Saturday June 6, 2020 at 4:00 pm at Kendal at Oberlin, OH. If you do not live at Kendal but are interested in joining the on-line memorial for Mary, please contact Dicken Funeral Home and Cremation Service (440) 322-3224 for the Zoom Contact information. Once travel is possible, her ashes will be interred both her husbands in Westwood Cemetery, Oberlin. If you wish to make a donation to honor her memory, please consider Planned Parenthood. Memorial Kendal at Oberlin Saturday, June 06, 2020 4:00 PM 600 Kendal Dr. Oberlin, OH 44074

To send flowers  
to the family or plant a tree  
in memory of Mary Beth McCalla, please visit our floral store.

[Read More](#)



## Tribute Wall

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MS

**Marylou (Beirlein) Stern** posted:

Liz, Bob, and Mimi: This is a wonderful tribute to your Mother, who was a wonderful, elegant, and genuinely nice woman. She lived many interesting lifetimes, and all in the service of others. What a special legacy she leaves. We have been giving monthly to Planned Parenthood for quite a while, but now that means more to me knowing how involved your Mother was with them. I'm sure you are all embracing many wonderful memories of your Mother. Be well. Mary Lou

June 6 at 8:00 PM

LG

**Laura Ginter** posted:

My sincere sympathies to Liz, Bob and Mimi and families on your mothers death. I have a fond memory of her visiting the house in Hope many years ago. I also remember that she was my sister, Beths, Kindergarten teacher in Wells. I did not know that her name was Beth also. May all your many memories sustain you during your grief at her passing. She was amazing.

June 6 at 8:00 PM



# **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Mary by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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