

We're gathered here today to give thanks for the love and faith known to us in and through Johnnye Nell Smith. In the joyous hope of resurrection we bid farewell to a beloved friend, devoted family member and church member, and a dedicated educator.

Each one of us knew Johnnye Nell Durham Smith differently, but those of us knew her well would tell you she would not want me to go on and on about her. Instead, she would want me to be simple and direct, but honest. I will certainly do my best.

I understood that simple and direct quality of hers firsthand from being in her 5<sup>th</sup> grade class at St. Christopher's School in the 60's. That year was the toughest year I experienced in school. I went from public school where my grades came very easily, to a private school where, clearly, my classmates were at least one semester ahead of me. I found Mrs. Smith to be firm and demanding as a teacher, but she was also kind, and instilled in me the good study habits that have lasted me a life time. To her credit I caught up fully that year, and finished the year with top grades. I was never so pleased with myself as I was to move up to the sixth grade, and I owe it all to her. After my fifth

grade year, school was never hard for me again. She prepared me well.

Other students say she was their favorite teacher also, in fact, one of my classmates recounted that she uses "Mrs. Smith's name" as a security password to answer the security question, "Who was your favorite teacher?" During her years in the classroom and out, she helped form hundreds of young learners, touching their lives in a lasting and loving way.

Johnnye Nell was actually a Speech major at Texas Tech University. She was asked to substitute for one of the teachers at St. Christopher's and ended up staying there for thirteen years. Afterward, she was the principal of Ballenger School, which was, at that time, a school for children with learning difficulties. The school later transitioned the children into the classroom due to mainstreaming, or inclusion as some know it now. Johnnye Nell felt she was called to teach reading, but she became known for her expertise in Special Education. She taught special ed classes at Texas Tech in the summers, and worked with LISD on their Resource Room during the early stages of mainstreaming children with learning disabilities in the school system. She worked in the field of Special Education until

her retirement. Johnnye Nell was a lifelong cheerleader and advocate for children.

She was just as devoted and loving in her family life. She and her husband, Don, met in Washington D.C. one summer during WWII, while he served in the Navy. She had entered Texas Tech, but left in her freshman year to work as a civil servant at the Pentagon during the war. The two of them met in a rowboat in the middle of the Potomac River. As Don retold the story, he and his Navy buddy were looking for a rowboat or canoe to take a quick afternoon boat excursion. With all the boats rented that day, his buddy found a couple of girls who offered to share their rowboat, and off they went. As the afternoon progressed an unexpected storm caused the weather to turn, and thereby forced Don to quickly row them to shore. After their exciting boat ride, Johnnye Nell wooed Don with her Southern fried chicken and the coin-operated washing machine in her apartment building, and the rest is history. Due to Don's work with the Navy, Johnnye Nell and Don often visited San Diego, their favorite place. They loved visiting Coronado Island and the Del Coronado Hotel, a magnificent hotel right on the Pacific. After his Navy days they settled in Lubbock, where they were

close to their families. Don and Johnnye Nell were happily married for sixty-eight years, had three children, and five granddaughters, all of whom have been greatly loved.

Michelle, their youngest daughter, who looks like her mother, mentioned her mom's love for baking and cooking, one of her most favorite things to do. She will be remembered long after she's gone for the fabulous meals and delicious desserts she lovingly baked for friends and family - an art that has now been passed along to her granddaughters. She had to make sure all those girls knew how to bake. How she loved her granddaughters and all the special times they spent together!

Some of us knew Johnnye Nell from her civic and church activities. She was a tireless volunteer with the St. Paul's Altar Guild, another one of her favorite things. She spent hours laundering and ironing the precious altar linens by hand, and was very specific with the task, often when no one else would do it. As her daughters said, she was not afraid to work hard. It had to be done just the right way! She was also a monthly bridge player with the Lubbock Women's Club, as well as being a member of other civic groups.

Johnnye Nell was raised in the Baptist Church and came to the Episcopal Church only as a “middle ground” after marrying her Roman Catholic sailor. She believed in God, family, service to her church and her community, and to being straightforward and honest. She was an “old school” kind of person AND an “old school” Episcopalian who had no appreciation at all for the passing of the peace. She also preferred the 1928 version of the Prayer Book with the older language and traditions, thus the “thees and thous” you hear today. She was a devout woman who deeply cherished her beliefs.

I think Johnnye Nell would tell me about now to “wrap it up,” so I’ll leave you all with these thoughts:

Scripture assures us that this beloved soul and follower of Christ- this wife, parent, grandparent, friend, and educator - has gone ahead of us to a place where there is no more sorrow or crying, neither pain, but life everlasting - a life with our Lord Jesus Christ. In the hope of resurrection that all Christians share, we may look forward to a time when we will be reunited with her again - a time when our hearts will no longer be heavy or sad - a time only to rejoice and be at peace. Until then we will take the blessings of her actions, her love, her dedication,

and her memory with us every day, and cherish them dearly until we, too, are united with Christ. In joy we give thanks to God for the precious life known as Johnnye Nell Durham Smith, which touched us all in such a loving and special way.

In the name of the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Amen.