



Mary Squilla

March 8, 1928 - June 13, 2026

Mary Anne Williams Sheppard Keating Squilla Taylor passed away on June 13, 2026, at her home in Cross City surrounded by family and caregivers. Born to Ollie U. and Lura Mae Caswell Williams in Homosassa, Florida on March 8, 1928, she was raised in Cross City. Mary was a devoted, loving, and caring daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, and friend. Mary attended the First United Methodist Church in Cross City beginning in 1930, and prior to her passing was the oldest living member of the church.

A 1945 graduate of Dixie County High School, Mary attended Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia for one year before transferring to the Florida State College for Women which soon became Florida State University. While attending F.S.U., she married high school sweetheart and fellow Cross City resident Charles E. Sheppard who also attended F.S.U. Mary and Charles welcomed son Charles David in 1949 and, ten years later, daughter Mary Hope. Mary graduated with a degree in music in 1950.

Mary's musical talents were evident from a very young age. Her first musical performance was singing in church at the age of two. During high school, she was the vocalist in a local big band "The Sentimental Seven." After graduating from college, Mary began her career as an educator in Cross City eventually becoming the music teacher for all public schools in Dixie County until her retirement in 1980. She was very proud of her chorus at Anderson Elementary

and the many student performances that she directed. She served for many years as the choir director for the Methodist church and later served as the organist until well in her 90s. Through the years, she shared her God-given talent and sang at numerous weddings, funerals and other events in the community. In her later years, you could often find her with mic in hand at the Putnam Lodge delivering a glowing rendition of an American standard.

Mary was deeply committed to her community and over the years served on the Board of Directors for the Suwannee River Economic Council, the Board of Commissioners for the Northwest Florida Regional Housing Authority, served as a Guardian ad Litem, and was a member of many organizations including the Dixie County Woman's Club, the Keynotes of South Hills, the Steinhatchee Garden Club, and the Dixie County Retired Educators Association. She received the Lifetime Service Award from the Dixie County Chamber of Commerce for outstanding community service, the Dixie Pioneer Award from the Dixie County Historical Society, and was a Lifetime Honorary Member of the Florida Sheriffs Association. She was an avid animal lover and advocate and operated as a one-woman humane society, rescuing numerous dogs and cats and having countless animals spayed and neutered.

Mary was blessed with loving husbands. In 1970, following Charles' 1968 passing, she married Julian Keating and they were married until Julian's death in 1987. In 1990, she married Joe Squilla and split her time between Cross City and Joe's home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania until Joe's death in 1998. In 2003, she married Frank Taylor from whom she became separated.

After her retirement, Mary dedicated herself to three "f's": family, fishing, and friends. She loved fishing and was a nemesis of redfish, trout, and strangers who dared cast a line in "her" Fishbone Creek. Among her favorite fishing buddies was F.S.U. football Coach Mickey Andrews. An ardent traveler, Mary visited most of the United States and her journeys took from Europe to the

islands of the South Pacific. No matter how far she roamed she was the happiest at Fanning Springs, the choir loft at the Methodist church, and at her camp at Fishbone, where in addition to fishing she found joy in painting. She made beautiful and delicious pound cakes and shared them often with friends and family. Mary loved to swim, was an accomplished bridge player, and had a love-hate relationship with penny-slot machines.

Mary is survived by her daughter, Hope (Sheppard) Keating and husband G.W. Harrell; grandson, Jonathan Sheppard and wife Courtenay, all of Tallahassee; daughter-in-law Connie Sheppard of Cross City; numerous beloved nieces and nephews, and her Hendry cousins. She was preceded in death by her son, David Sheppard; husbands Charles Sheppard, Julian Keating, and Joseph Squilla; parents Ollie U. and Lura Mae Caswell Williams; and brothers Mershon, Jack, and Thomas Williams.

The family would like to thank friends and caregivers Imogene Nichols, Jennie Herring, Brenda Liles, Darline Cason, Shakima Brown, Marcie Byrd, and Karen Monk for their tender loving care of Mary.

A celebration of Mary's life will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 25, 2026, at the First United Methodist Church of Cross City, with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in Mary's memory to one of the charities dear to her heart: Residing Hope (formerly the United Methodist Children's Home), 51 Children's Way, Enterprise, FL 32725, www.residinghope.org, or the ASPCA, P.O. Box 96929, Washington, D.C. 20090-6929, www.aspca.org.

Arrangements have been placed under the care of Rick Gooding Funeral Home Cross City Chapel, with locations in Cross City 352-498-5400 and Chiefland 352-493-0050. Please sign the online guest book at

rickgoodingfuneralhomes.com

Upcoming Events

Memorial Service

JUL **25**. 2:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church Cross City
22 NE 138 Street
Cross City, FL 32628