



Mary Alice Brown

July 21, 1948 - May 4, 2020

Age 71 of Circle Pines, MN, passed away on May 4, 2020 after a long battle with cancer.

Mary Alice Houtkooper was born on July 21, 1948 in Wadena, Minnesota. Her parents were Charles & Ellanora Houtkooper. Charlie was a baker and Ell was a homemaker. The Houtkooper's had 4 children: Jon, Mary, Emir & Jane.

Their family moved to Fargo, North Dakota when Mary was a small child.

Charlie was one of the owners of Quality Bakery in Fargo until he retired and sold his portion of the business.

Mary was baptized & confirmed at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Fargo. Mary was a gifted pianist and also played the violin. Mary graduated from Fargo Central High School in 1966. She received her teaching degree from Valley City State College in 1970 with a major in Elementary Education with a minor in Music.

Mary met Charlie Brown at White Earth Lutheran Bible Camp (near Wabun, Minnesota) the week before she started college. They hit it off right away and he gave her a ride home from camp. The next week at a freshman "Sadie Hawkins Day Mixer", Mary asked Charlie to dance. They dated for two years and were married on October 5, 1968 at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Fargo. While in college, Mary played the organ at the Epworth Methodist Church and Charlie worked at Straus (a men's clothing store) & served as a lay preacher on a regular basis. After they both graduated in 1970, Mary put her teaching aspirations on hold as Charlie entered Northwestern Lutheran Seminary in St.

Paul, Minnesota. While Charlie was in seminary, Mary worked as a bank teller to help support them and Charlie was employed as a youth director. Charlie graduated from seminary in 1974 & The Brown's moved to Racine, Wisconsin, to serve Holy Communion Lutheran Church. It was in Racine, that they adopted the first of four beautiful African-American babies. Aaron was their first child. He was followed by Adam, Abby & Allison. The children were often termed: "The A Team". The Brown's had three grandchildren: Jaden, Jaron, and Alexi.

Mary worked as a homemaker, a piano teacher, and ran a daycare out of their home in Fargo. After all of her children were in school, Mary worked as a secretary/bookkeeper for Hospice of the Red River Valley in Fargo. She had beautiful handwriting. As the years went by, Mary served as a short & long-term substitute music or elementary teacher in Chicago, Illinois, and Crookston, Minnesota, & before becoming a first-grade teacher at Centerville Elementary School. Mary loved being a teacher. Mary taught in Centerville for ten years before her first bout with appendix/colon cancer forced her to resign. Mary was a private, gentle, introverted, selfless individual. She was special, but she would never tell you that. She was loving and nurturing. When her kids asked her if they could do something, she would think it over and respond by saying: "I suppose...". Mary was a very inclusive person with a strong Christian faith. That faith helped her survive the unexpected death of her youngest son, Adam, in 2004. Mary was a wonderful pastor's wife. She took part in ways that interested her. Such as: being in worship regularly, supporting Redeemer Lutheran financially, teaching Sunday School, leading youth choirs, serving as a youth mentor, taking part in church Bible Studies and Adult Forums, member of the Joy/Peace Circle, cutting quilt squares for the church quilters, ushering, and purchased Christmas gifts for needy children. She also sponsored educational programs for children in third-world countries. Mary looked forward to getting together with the retired pastors and/or spouses of Redeemer on a monthly basis. Their friendship and support was unique and special. Mary was very prim and proper. She was extremely

loyal and nurturing to her family and students. She was smart and talented. Mary was also a very organized and dependable woman.

Mary never sought the spotlight; but referred that honor to others. She was beautiful. From an early age, she was blessed with a head of shiny silver-gray hair. From time to time, she would surprise us with her funny outbursts and infectious laughter and smile! But most of the time when Charlie would tell a story or joke, Mary would just turn her head, roll her eyes and say: "Charlie"! Mary was a talented musician. She could play by reading notes or play by ear. She had perfect pitch. She often sang, "Puff the Magic Dragon" as she put her children to bed. Mary played the violin in the Racine Symphony and played piano, organ, guitar or mandolin for many church services over the years. One of her favorite musical joys was playing the piano for the Crookston Community Summer Musical: "Oklahoma". She was happy to sit and play the piano for hours during the rehearsals. Mary said it was truly therapeutic for her.

In the last eight years, we readily saw how strong and resilient Mary was, as she battled her cancer. Mary had exploratory surgery in 2012, and appendix/colon cancer was found. She followed that with twelve chemotherapy treatments and annual check-ups for five years. Her doctor told her at that time that the cancer was gone; so, she didn't have to come back for anymore check-ups. Six months later the same dreaded cancer returned. In the last two years Mary endured over fifty chemo-therapy treatments and fought through the terrible side-effects that they brought. She did not complain about her pain and never wanted to be a burden on others. She was a brave woman and warrior!

Mary's hobbies included: crossword puzzles & Sudoku, singing & playing music, cooking (Her family especially liked her Swedish Meatballs, homemade cream-style corn and her grilled cheese & bacon sandwiches.), baking (Her apple pies and caramel rolls were wonderful!), and caring for her forest of household plants & outdoor gardens. She loved to read and re-read the "Ann

of Green Gables" series of books and the legal thrillers written by Lisa Scottoline.

She loved to spend time with her family as well as experience time by herself. Given the opportunity, Mary would choose to sleep-in and move slowly in the morning. Relaxing in a meditative bubble bath was a luxury she enjoyed. She would say, "Charlie, it's a beautiful day. You should go fishing." Reading to her granddaughter Lexi at night made her happy. As did prepping for her classroom projects. Having chickens, ducks or butterflies hatch or develop in the classroom were always exciting times for her. Mary had to have her sweets (Orange candy slices, licorice, Werther's caramels and Trident gum) were her favorites. She was an ardent shopper who was always looking for bargains. In free moments, Mary enjoyed watching the History Channel and HGTV. She was a fan of: Downtown Abbey, American Pickers, The Duggar's, Castle and The Rookie. Mary also loved looking forward to extended family gatherings over the holidays.

Mary was a homebody. She did however travel to Puerto Rico, Cancun, California, Florida, Canada and the Wisconsin Dells. In late December of last year, with her strength waning, Mary planned and carried out "A Girl's Trip" to Disneyworld in Orlando, Florida. Mary, Abby, Allison and Lexi had a wonderful and memorable time together.

Mary did not like: ironing, Buddy sitting on the family room couch or peeing in her garden, or anything going wrong with her car. Violence in TV shows or movies upset her, so she didn't watch them.

Mary was an amazing wife, mother and grandmother. She always put others before herself. She had a passive-aggressive personality and kept many of her tender feelings inside. Mary did not like it when her kids fought with each other or didn't listen to her. Charlie feeding Buddy from the table also irritated her. Mary was a cat person. Smokey, Midnight and Moon produced many happy moments for her.

Mary and Charlie lived a simple life. They were not consumed with monetary wealth, but with meaningful relationships. Their greatest treasure was their

relationship with their children. Mary's dream for her children and grandchildren was that they would be happy.

Mary Alice Brown...we will miss you, but we look forward to seeing you again in a realm without any disease or pain or tears. Blessed be your memory. Celebration of life will be held at a later date. Interment at Sunset Memorial Gardens, Fargo, ND.

"The moment of meeting is the beginning of parting ... but the moment of parting is the beginning of meeting again."

Tribute Wall

KH

“ I remember Mary from our early days at St. Mark's as a lovely, quiet person with a fabulous smile. I'm so sorry for your loss, and I'm sorry I didn't know Mary later in life. She sounds like she lived a full and fulfilling life.

Karen Hall - June 01, 2020 at 12:00 AM

DJ

“ Good memories of Mary & Charlie while serving in Cavalier.



Darold&Ardella Johnson - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

CD

“ Pastor Charlie & family, my sympathy & prayers to you. Mary was a quiet, special lady but she certainly could make the church organ come alive at United!

Cindy DuBois - May 16, 2020 at 12:00 AM

AB

“ Mary was the best grandma i could've ever asked for. She read to me and took care of me like i was her own daughter. I will miss her dearly



Alexi Brown - May 14, 2020 at 12:00 AM

HB

“ I felt the love that Mary had for others and others had for her when I read this. I wish I would have known her personally. Pastor Charlie always kept our Worship Service group at the monthly Norgard Ct. informed on how she was doing.

We are all thinking about you here at Norgard Ct., Pastor Charlie.

Helengrace Bauer - May 14, 2020 at 12:00 AM

KL

“ My deepest condolences to Charlie and the entire Brown family fir your loss of such a beautiful woman in so many ways. Much love.



Karen Lodico - May 13, 2020 at 12:00 AM

DH

“ Your mother's grace, your father's strength and wisdom-- a beautiful combination

Don Houtkooper - May 12, 2020 at 12:00 AM

LE

“ Dear Charlie and family, Mary was a kind, gentle soul. May you find peace in the comforting arms of the Lord. And my you find joy in your memories of Mary. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. ~
The Bauers

Lenette - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

WH

“ *Mary brought a calmness to everyone she met. The world will miss her.*



Wuzzy Houtkooper - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

NY

“ *I am sorry for the loss of your beautiful wife and wonderful mother. Mary was certainly one of the kindest, caring and soft spoken person I had the pleasure of meeting. It was a joy and blessing to have known her and to have been part of your "Beaver Lake family". God bless you all, I am praying you have comfort and peace knowing that she has the Lord and eternal life through him. Nancy Young Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Love Nancy Young*



Nancy Young - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

MT

“ *Dear Pastor Charlie and family - praying for you during this very difficult time. I was blessed to have known Mary all these years and she will be greatly missed. She was a very sweet and wonderful person - I always enjoyed our visits. Praying God's comfort and peace to you during this time. Mike*



Mike Trudeau - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

TD

“ *Pastor Charlie,
I am so sorry to hear of Mary passing. I
enjoyed the few times she filled in when Deb
was away.*

*I knew she was very talented but she was
always so humble. May her light shine forever. And I know she will
miss your stories. I know I do. God Bless you and your family as
you celebrate her Wonderful life.*



Tom Dale - May 11, 2020 at 12:00 AM

EM

“ *Oh, Charlie and family...my heart hurts today
learning of Mary's death. My mind is flooded
with beautiful memories from Valley City and
the blossoming romance of your relationship
with Mary. We haven't seen each other in*

*MANY years, but my love is with you and prayers ascend for you
and the family. God's peace be over you, special friend. Love -
Libby*



Elizabeth (Rydquist) Mangold - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

“ Charlie

We are so sorry to hear of your loss, and wish you to know your family is in our hearts and prayers for strength and comfort on your loss. May God grant you peace and comfort in this time. The following is not my own creation, but it is my wish for your family.

I wish you enough.

I wish you enough weakness so that you know the great measure of your strength.

I wish you enough sadness so that you learn to appreciate the moments of bliss.

I wish you enough joy so that your heart feels full and blessed.

I wish you enough happiness to know that the world is good, even on the days when it feels wild and crazy and so far from beautiful.

I wish you enough hands to hold and lips to kiss so that you learn the meaning of love.

I wish you enough heartbreak, so that you realize the true love you deserve.

I wish you enough loneliness so that you become independent and start loving yourself.

I wish you enough confidence so that you are capable, but not conceited.

I wish you enough love so that you understand the meaning and significance of it, and so that when you're ready for it, you aren't scared to fall in.

I wish you enough laughter so that you learn to slow down and appreciate the people and things around you.

I wish you enough disappointment so that you never lose sight of all that you have.

I wish you enough pain so that you learn to stand on your own two feet and to trust God.

I wish you enough toughness to sustain through the hard days, and enough frailty to learn your own limits.

Larry and Viv.

Larry and Viviane Valberg - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

CS

“ *Dear Charlie and family - what a sweet and tender woman! Conversations outside your house allowed me to get a glimpse at Mary's love of family, a quiet personality but we all knew that she lived for her family. Charlie I know the pain is immense. She was your rock. Continue telling those stories, the memories keep her with you as friends and family add to the tales.*

Catherine Gustafson Sanderson - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

JZ

“ *So sorry to hear of Mary's death. Your family wrote a wonderful tribute to her life in this obituary. We fondly remember singing with Mary and Charlie in choir. God's blessings to you, Charlie, and all of your family as you mourn your loss. Missing our times together, Jeanne and Bob
God is good!*

Jeanne and Robert Zaske - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ *We are so sad at your family's great loss. God be with you always. Thank you for sharing this beautiful tribute to Mary.*

LuAnn Siekas - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ *Charlie and Family - our hearts break for your loss but also are grateful for her now being in Heaven with the Lord. Our prayers to the family during this difficult time - God Bless!*

Brian and Megan Slipka - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

LG

“ *Cousin Chuck, After reading about your Mary, we can tell she was an amazing, gentle and talented woman. She had much to offer with all those she shared her life and did so with grace, honor and love. A wonderful legacy! Sending condolences and love to you and your children....*

Linda & Loren Gustafson - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

JA

“ *Charlie, Abby, Alison and entire family;*

So sorry for your lose. Please remember Mary is in heaven looking down with a huge smile for her family!

*God bless;
julia and Gary and girls*

Julia Anderson - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

LG

“ *Charlie and family:*

I was saddened deeply by the news of the loss of this wonderful woman and my dear friend. Our wonderful visits with each other have been memories I have always cherished. You have always been such wonderful friends. Being next door neighbors, when both our families were new in Crookston, was such a blessing. John and I will be in contact soon. Prayers and love to all of you. The Gevens Family.

Lynn Gevens - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

JN

“ Charley, a message of love from many of us at OSLC who think of both you and Mary fondly. Peggy and I share in your sorrow. We hold you in our prayers for strength and comfort through these challenging times.

Jim & Peggy Nelson - May 10, 2020 at 12:00 AM

NC

“ Dear Pastor Charlie and family Niel and I are so sorry to hear of Mary's passing Please know you are in our thoughts and prayers



Niel and Linda Carik - May 08, 2020 at 12:00 AM

P(

“ Charlie and family, although I think I only actually met your Mary a hand full of times, When you lived in Cavalier ND, I have always felt like I knew her and your Aaron. Why is that? Well because you were all like part of the Ray Becker family! You all were so kind and loving to them and they to you. I remember them talking about Mary's talent at the piano, AND THE EYE ROLL! Many stories, that brought smiles and laughter.

You all were blessed with a talented, wonderful, loving, caring, supportive woman. Her journey and work here are earth are done, she now walks the golden paths of Heaven with her maker. She is reunited with loved one that preceded her, they all will wait for you at that wonderful feast He has promised us all. God be with in your sorrow and days to come.

Love to "the other part" of our Becker family.

Pat & Charlie Hawkins, Rhon, Ray and Yolanda

Pat (Becker)Hawkins - May 08, 2020 at 12:00 AM

PL

“ Mary is remembered by people at St. Mark's. I'm glad that I was able to meet her. May God comfort you, Charlie, and all your family in your tremendous loss. This is a lovely memorial. Peace be with you. Pastor Joe



Pastor Joe Larson - May 08, 2020 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ Pastor Charlie & Family, May the ones that surround you with hugs, words, kindness bring you all strength through the pain, smiles through the tears and love for all to share. Let the memories/stories shared bring you all courage and faith. Our deepest sympathy to all of you at this sad and difficult time. Don & Michelle (Hardy) Murray



Michelle (Hardy) Murray - May 08, 2020 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ Mary was such a special and kind person. Growing up in the St. Mark's Lutheran Church family I had the opportunity to get to know Mary and Charlie and their family. I will never forget her beautiful piano playing. What a talent! With Heartfelt Sympathy, Jana & Jerry Steffan

Jana (Blakeway) & Jerry Steffan - May 08, 2020 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ I will always remember Mary as my teaching partner, my friend, a classy & proper lady. She was a great teacher and loved to share stories about her family. What a great loss for your family and for all of us. So sorry for your loss.

Mickey Bluedorn - May 06, 2020 at 12:00 AM