

A portrait of an elderly woman with short, curly, light-colored hair, wearing glasses and a dark jacket with a white collar. She is smiling slightly. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of blue and purple.

Mary Elizabeth
Catalyn Brennen

November 12, 1928 to January 7, 2015

**Service of Celebration
For the Life of**



**Mary Elizabeth
Catalyn Brennen**

November 12, 1928 to January 7, 2015

**Service Held At
Grant's Town Seventh-day Adventist Church
January 18, 2015, 1:00 p.m.**

Officiating Ministers

Pastor Keith A. Albury
Pastor Barrington H. Brennen
Pastor Eric D. Clarke
Pastor Paul Scavella
Pastor Hugh A. Roach
Pastor John Carey
Pastor Leslie V. McMillan

Internment

Ebenezer Methodist Church Cementery

Mary Elizabeth Catalyn Brennen



Mary Elizabeth was born on November 12, 1928 to Theresa Elizabeth Major, formerly of Roses, Long Island and Peter David Catalano (Catalyn) formerly of Sicily, Italy. She grew up in St. Matthew's Parish, on Shirley Street, commonly known as "The Pond". Neighbourhoods being what they were in those days, she was nurtured, loved and cherished by all. Manners and respect and being kind to others, were instilled in her at an early age and these aspects of good training were evident throughout her life.

Mary's early education began at Mrs. Julia Johnson-Sawyer's Kindergarten School located on Cole Road and later renamed Bilney Lane. From there, she was enrolled at Eastern Preparatory School, known throughout time as "Sands' School" named after the headmistress, an outstanding educator of the day. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Sands also lived in "The Pond" and walked many of the children from the area to school with her.

Following her primary education, she then moved to Eastern Junior School, fondly referred to as "Worrell School" named after its Headmistress, Mrs. Mamie Worrell, another outstanding educator of the day. "Worrell School" was located on East Bay Street and in later years included in The Pond area, because of proximity.

From there, she transferred to Eastern Senior School, on Shirley Street, now the site of the Eastern Post Office. Donald Webster Davis was the headmaster, an educator par excellence and a driving force behind his students to obtain the high quality education offered at the time and become the outstanding citizens, which many of them became.

Among her many teachers and in addition to those already mentioned were: Mrs. Agnes Lightbourn-Archer, Mrs. Mildred Lightbourn-Sawyer, Mrs. C. H. (Mary) Reeves, Mrs. Cassie Kennear and Mr. Dawson Conliffe. Upon reaching the seventh grade in 1943, Mary was chosen among a specially selected few students to act as a substitute teacher, to fill the place of those teachers who had one week- or two-week leave to "sit" the Senior Cambridge Examinations, the highest educational level offered in The Bahamas at that time.

In those young formative years, young boys and girls were encouraged to apprentice for certain "trades" or professions that would help them later in life. Mary was apprenticed to the Misses Muriel and Madeline Minus, her next door neighbours, who were dressmakers and milliners. Their father J. H. C. Minus and brother Ronald, were first-class tailors. It was a blessing as she was able to obtain a well rounded sewing, hat making, knitting, smocking and embroidering foundation. In school, Eastern Senior, Mrs. Reeves, offered Home Economics classes in which she participated. She was an active member of the YWCA as most young girls of the day were, and when Mrs. Trevor Kelly put out the call for "knitters" to knit woolens for the Red Cross to be sent to those fighting in World War II, Mary was there with them doing her part. She knitted sweaters, pullovers, gloves, muffs, scarves, socks and other woolen items, for the cause.

During the time that Mary served as "student/teacher", she was closely observed, and Headmaster Davis, noticed that she had a love for children and a natural calling for the classroom. Mr. Davis encouraged her to join the teaching profession and was instrumental in having her, along with other "student/teachers" as pupil teachers. In January 1944, she joined the staff of Eastern Preparatory School No. 1 ("Sands' School"), as a pupil teacher where Miss Olive Hanna served as principal. Her starting salary was 2 pounds, 10 Shillings

(sterling), or (4 shillings to the U. S. dollar at the time) \$12.50 per month. Years later the ratio was raised to 7 shillings to the U. S. dollar.

Mary's introduction into the classroom was at the Class One level. This first year's experience pales in comparison to today's teachers as she was given eighty bright-eyed boys and girls to teach. Among many of her students at that time were, L. M. Maxwell Bowe, Sir Arlington Butler, Msgr. Preston Moss, Hon. Kendal Nottage, Burgiss Winder, Sonia Bowe Dames and her own brother James, to name a few. Sands' School was divided into three classrooms by floor to ceiling folded partitions. The porch was also used as a classroom as needed. Students sat on long wooden benches, with slates and chalk, which they had to wipe clean after each lesson. Exercise books were only used for homework, which when sent home, received the full attention of parents or guardians. Mrs. Mildred Lightbourn-Sawyer was made headmistress of the school and Mrs. Sybil Collie Butler joined the staff and became one of her dearest friends.

During this period Mary was observed periodically by Mr. T.A. Thompson (director of Education) and Mr. Wilton Albury, both outstanding educators of that era. Within two years she was promoted to assistant teacher and subsequently recommended each year to receive increments because of her display of excellence, hard work, and dedication. At that time, there were no fancy charts, bulletin board trims and paper. Mary, like many teachers then, had to be creative and make her own teaching aids. She used all available material: pictures from magazines or labels from empty cans, Tamarind and Poinciana seeds, sea shells or soda bottle covers, and match sticks were used for counters. There were no sophisticated workbooks, but children learned their lessons.

Mary attended Ebenezer Methodist Church where she was actively involved in church work. She was a Sunday school teacher and active in the Young People's Fellowship among other aspects of church life.

Although not a regular habit, Mary and some of her "out east" friends would occasionally visit one of the popular "over-the-hill" nightclubs, the Zanzibar or the Silver Slipper, as entertainment, especially for their Halloween and Valentine's Day dances. It was at the Silver Slipper that her husband of 63 years did spy her, and to hear him tell it, he walked in the door as Freddie Munnings band was playing, scanned the dance floor and noticed an exquisite lady, a good dancer on the dance floor. He observed her until the band stopped, noticed where she sat and followed up to the upper balcony, and from behind her he asked for the next dance. At first she refused until she turned around and noticed who had asked her and accepted his hand to dance, and they danced until the last number before midnight on that Christmas Eve as the band played, "On a Slow Boat to China," and the rest is history.

To divert briefly, the lyrics are: "I'd love to get you on a Slow Boat to China, All to myself alone. Get you and keep you in my arms evermore, Leave all your lovers, Weeping on a far away shore. Out on the briny, With the moon big and shiny, Melting your heart of stone, I'd love to get you on a Slow Boat to China, All to myself alone." (Frank Loesser, circa 1940's). It was their song. How romantic.

July 18, 1951, at Ebenezer Methodist Church, Shirley Street, Rev. Lovelock joined Mary Elizabeth Catalyn and Alfred Addington Alexander Brennen (a construction worker, now a building contractor) in holy matrimony. Their attendants were Mrs. Elva Collie Tynes, maid of honour and Mr. Ezekiel Major, best man. Alfred was very supportive of Mary through the years, in her quest for excellence. He recalls carrying her teaching load many days on his bicycle, as they did not own a motor vehicle during the early years of marriage. They lived in a house at the top of Fort Fincastle Hill and following in the footsteps of Mrs. Alice Sands, guided a lot of students along the way, to "Sands' School", an act of kindness much appreciated by her neighbours and friends. This trend continued at Bahamas Academy in later years, especially after she learned to drive a car, as the car was always filled with many passengers seeking a ride to school.

In December of 1951, Mary and her husband Alfred were baptized into The Seventh-day Adventist faith following a series of Bible studies. Other persons baptized along with them were Pastor Hugh A. Roach and Mrs. Mable Mason. They worshiped at Grant's Town Seventh-day Church, where she became an active and formidable member.

In 1957, and after accepting the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Mary was inspired to join the staff of her church school, Bahamas Academy. Her decision to leave the Government service resulted in a loss of income, decreasing her salary from 48 pounds sterling, to 24 pounds sterling, per month; but because of her dedication and commitment to her new found faith, the sacrifice seemed immaterial to her. Mr. Wilfred W. Liske, the then principal, placed her in charge of Grades 3 and 4, with only 13 students.

In 1968, to better prepare for the changing challenges of the classroom and the times, Mary attended the Teachers Training College, Oakes Field and successfully completed her course of study, obtaining her Teacher Certificate in 1969. Throughout the following years, she continued to attend workshops and seminars to improve her teaching skills and strategies.

During her years of service at Bahamas Academy, she became known as "the nurse." Her duties increased from teaching in the classroom to looking after all the sick school children from day to day. Also, because her niece and nephews attended Bahamas Academy, she became "Aunt Mary" to many. At the school, Mary served under many principals, including Pastor Hugh Roach, Dr. John Carey and Dr. Ruth White. In 1986, when the school was divide into two separate campuses, Mary was asked to serve as the vice-principal of the Elementary Division of Bahamas Academy, along with Dr. Althea McMillan as principal. She served in that capacity until her retirement in 1997.

She also became the school's most valued counselor. Many would remember Mrs. Brennen as a stern and firm teacher and disciplinarian as vice-principal; however, it can be attested that these were administered with a double portion of love and compassion and spiritual counsel for her students. She is proud of the fact that many of her students, whom she taught from Primary School through to her retirement, have become upright and respected citizens: lawyers, bankers, doctors, priests, pastors, nurses, teachers, police officers, architects, carpenters, builders, plumbers, electricians, the list goes on. She was satisfied that through her efforts she was able to lay a firm foundation on which to build an education.

Mary dedicated 53 years of her life to teaching excellence and administration. Thirteen of these years were given to public service at the Eastern Preparatory School and 40 years of uninterrupted service were given to her church school, Bahamas Academy of Seventh-day Adventists.

In addition to her teaching career pursuits, through the years Mary Elizabeth Brennen served faithfully and with equal fervour in various leadership capacities in her church, as Sabbath School leader, Dorcas leader, Community Services leader and also as the first Children's Ministries director for the Bahamas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Her works in church life and the community are legendary. She worked along with the Dorcas group, providing much needed clothing and other items for the less fortunate; assisted with the school's fairs and other fund-raising church activities. Who could forget her corn dogs, corn fritters, fried breadfruit, vegelona sandwiches, scallop (taste like conch) salad, her bread puddings, raisin duffs, bennie cakes, and peanut brittle, all made with love to support her church and school work. In her early years Mrs. Brennen was such an exquisite cook that she catered for many wedding receptions. Her vegetarian recipes are used by many today, such as her veggie burger loaf.

After serving at the Grants Town Church for 40 years, Mary and Alfred accepted the call, along with Stanley and Ruby Major, to become founding/charter members of the Ephesus Seventh-day Church now known as the Parkgate Seventh-day Adventist Church. Their efforts as a team in establishing and nurturing that new congregation are etched into the annals of history.

Her love for community services work was still evident even in her seasoned years as she accepted full responsibility for the soup kitchen operated by Parkgate Seventh-day Adventist Church, where she, in her kitchen, along with other members, cooked large pots of soup to feed the hungry and those in need. One of her favourite sayings was, "Ah child! The Lord will provide." Mrs. Brennen remained active as head deaconess and Community Service leader up to her 79th year, when only for health reason she laid the mantle down.

Mary was an outstanding member of the Pond Reunion Committee and along with her cousin Juanita Butler, Donna Thompson-Sherman, and Lady Alicia Fountain served as an historian of The Pond. Additionally she served faithfully with distinction as treasurer for The Bahamas National Children's Committee with Canon Harry Ward for many years.

Throughout her many years of service and involvement, she and her husband Alfred, whom she lovingly referred to as "Dear" worked together as a team, supporting each other in their many undertakings, in school, church or community work.

Her many awards include:

- The Commonwealth of The Bahamas Silver Jubilee Award, in recognition of "Outstanding contribution to the National Development of Education," July 1988.
- Who's Who in The Bahamas, Mother of The Year Award, Mother's Day, May 13, 1990.
- The Certificate of Honour from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, for long and dedicated service to the community in the field of education, in the Queen's Honours, January 1, 1996.
- Recipient of an Honorary Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education (Honoris Causa) from Northern Caribbean University, June, 1996
- The Recipient of the Precious Conch Pearl Award, 1998.
- West Indies Union of Education Very Special Award for 40 Years of Education Ministry, October 18, 2003.

She received many other awards too numerous to mention.

Mary Elizabeth Catalyn Brennen was a loving, committed, and dedicated wife and mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. Many fond memories of her will linger forever in our hearts.

Her Survivors

Her husband of 63 years: Alfred Addington Alexander Brennen

Children and their Spouses:

Claudia and Norman Seymour, Barrington and Annick Brennen, Judith and Winston "Donnie" Edwards, Ann Albury

Grandchildren and their Spouses:

Vernessa and Ansel Rahming, Keturah and Keith Bryan, Christina and Devaughn Rahming, Marguerite and Leslie Samuel, Gerard and Dana Brennen, Donovan Edwards, Jonathon and Jackie Edwards, Adam Edwards, Keith and Opal Albury, Alden Albury, Brendon and Jennifer Albury

Great Grandchildren:

Ane, Aneisha, and Lawrence Rahming; Keith, Dauntez, and Ava Bryan; Alexander and Malachi Brennen; Noah Samuel; Penny Edwards; Kady and Zoe Albury, Keith Christian Albury

Brothers and Spouse:

Theresa and Peter Catalano II and James J. Catalyn

Nieces, Nephews, and Spouses:

Derek and Tracey Catalano, Kirk and Maureen Catalano, David and Monique Catalano, Randon Catalyn, Jethro Dixon, Anthony and Gina Pieri, Charles and Mycola Quant

Grand Nephews:

Christopher and Carlito Catalano, Skye and Sabian Catalano, Deangelo Catalano, Cayden Catalyn, David, Charles, Douglas and Anthony Quant

Grand Nieces:

Isabella and Olivia Pieri, Jamie and Karissa Catalano, Blayre Catalyn, Cai-Lily Catalyn, Candice and Maria Quant, Ashley and B'yonca Dixon

Greatgrand Nephews:

Stephon, Nicholas, and Kristin Quant; David Quant II; Xiavier Quant

Greatgrand Nieces:

Mycola Rahming, Desire and Kanya Quant

Other Close Relatives and Friends:

Inez Major (Roses, Long Island), Althea Lightbourne, Louis W. A. Hanchell, His Excellency Ambassador Lowell Mortimer, Margaret Smith-Brown, Loretta Algreen, the descendents of Lady Caroline Butler, the Hon. Kendal and Ruby Nottage and her siblings, Sandy and Cedric Johnson, Dame Ivy Dumont, the descendants of Evangeline Jervis of Grand Bahama, Ellamae Ferguson-Graham, Vernita Roach, Virginia Butler, Marcus Higgs, Nolda Thomas, Stanley and Ruby Major and Family, the Seymour family, Bettymae Kemp and family, Winston and Estherlean Ash, Ethlyn Gibson and family, Ivy Humes, Ellamae Neely, Carmeta Humes, Francita Seymour and family, Dr. Ruth White, Mrs. Mavis Deveaux, Avril Sullivan and family, Mae Ward, Erma Burrows, Dr. Joseph and Mrs. Ethel Evans, Betty Moses, Pastor Leslie and Mrs. Wealthia McMillan, Pastor Silas and Mrs Ruth McKinney, Pastor Hugh and Mrs. Olga Roach, Canon and Mrs. Harry Ward, Elva Collie Tynes and family, Helena Dorsett, Sister Mary Benedict Pratt OSB, H. E. Ambassador Dr. Elliston Rahming, Fannette Albury and Family, Percy and Rosetta Miller, Gloria Brown, Stanley and Gertrude Fernander, Sir Arlington Butler, Msgr. Preston Moss, the descendants of Haynes Dorsett, the Rahming family, Naomi and Lionel Symonett, Camile (Catalyn) Cartwright, Karen Catalyn, Pastor Eric and Mrs. Patrice Clarke, officers and members of the Parkgate Seventh-day Adventist Church, pastor, officers and members of the Grants Seventh-day Adventist Church, Pastor Leonard and Mrs. Denise Johnson, and officers of the Atlantic Caribbean Union, Pastor Paul and Mrs. Joan Scavella, and officers of the South Bahamas Conference, Nurse Althea Neely, Nurse Dawn Albury-Gaitor and Dr. Indira Grimes, the original Pond Reunion Committee

Order of Service

Musical Prelude Select Musicians
Adventist Vocal Ensemble, Ena Cooper, Colyn Major, Centerville Church Choir, Kenny Major

Entrance of Family “Pomp and Circumstance”

Pastoral Sentences Pastor Eric D. Clarke
Pastor, Parkgate Seventh-day Adventist Church

Hymn “For All the Saints”

For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who thee by faith before the world confessed.
Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Thou wast their Rock, their Fortress and their Might;
Thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou, in the darkness drear, their one true light.
Alleluia! Alleluia!

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Thro' gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Prayer Pastor John Carey
Former Principal, Bahamas Academy

Music Selections Alison Rolle
Carlton Wright
Former Students

Condolences..... Pastor Paul Scavella
President, South Bahamas Conference

Pastor Hugh A. Roach
*Former President, South Bahamas Conference
Former Principal, Bahamas Academy and Friend*

Scripture Reading Psalm 23 Elder Norman Seymour
Son-In-law

Music Selection JoAnn DeVeaux-Callender
Former Student

Hymn “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place”
Mary's Favorite Hymn

MY FAITH HAS FOUND A RESTING PLACE

My faith has found a resting place,
Not in a manmade creed;
I trust the ever living One,
That He for me shall plead.

My great Physician heals the sick,
The lost He came to save;
For me His precious blood He shed,
For me His life He gave.

Refrain
I need no other evidence,
I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died,
And rose again for me.

Eulogy *"Family Tributes"* Pastor Barrington Brennen
Son
"I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked"

"The Holy City"
Claudia, Keturah, and Marguerite
Daughter and Granddaughters

Scripture Psalm 136:1-6, 24-26 Elder Earl Thomas
Parkgate Seventh-day Adventist Church

Music Grant's Town and Parkgate Combined Church Choirs
Harold Dorsett, Soloist

Homily Pastor Keith A. Albury
Grandson

Prayer for the Family Pastor Leslie V. McMillan
Former President, Bahamas Conference

Hallelujah Chorus Combined Church Choirs

Recessional Hymn *"When We All Get to Heaven"*

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus;
Sing his mercy and his grace.
In the mansions bright and blessed
He'll prepare for us a place.

While we walk the pilgrim pathway,
Clouds will overspread the sky;
But when traveling days are over,
Not a shadow, not a sigh.

Refrain
When we all get to heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be!
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory!

Let us then be true and faithful,
Trusting, serving every day;
Just one glimpse of him in glory
Will the toils of life repay.

Onward to the prize before us!
Soon his beauty we'll behold;
Soon the pearly gates will open;
We shall tread the streets of gold.

Graveside Service



Hymn Pastor

Shall we gather at the river,
Where bright angel feet have trod,
With its crystal tide forever
Flowing by the throne of God?

On the margin of the river,
Washing up its silver spray,
We will walk and worship ever,
All the happy golden day.

Refrain

*Yes, we'll gather at the river,
The beautiful, the beautiful river;
Gather with the saints at the river
That flows by the throne of God.*

Soon we'll reach the shining river,
Soon our pilgrimage will cease;
Soon our happy hearts will quiver
With the melody of peace.

Scripture Pastor Brendon Albury
Grandson

Committal Pastor Leslie V. McMillan

Prayer Pastor Eric D. Clarke

Hymn "It is Well with My Soul"

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

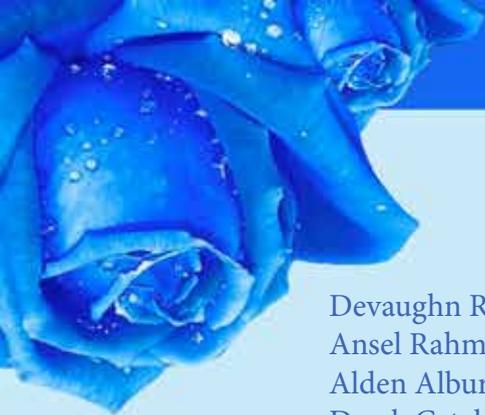
Refrain

*It is well with my soul,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

My sin—oh, the joy of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.





Pallbearers

Devaughn Rahming
Ansel Rahming, Sr.
Alden Albury
Derek Catalano

David Catalano
Keith Bryan
Jethro Dixon



RESTRICTED PHOTO AND VIDEO TAKING

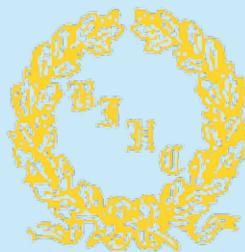
The family requests that there be no taking of photos or videos in the sanctuary. The official photographer will take photos. Persons desiring to take photos and videos at the grave side are to be reminded that such photos are for private use only not to be used on any online and printed media without authorization.

OFFICIAL WEBSITE

The official website for Mary Brennen is www.soencouragement.org/mary. Persons wishing to give condolences or tributes can send them to barringbrennen@gmail.com to be published on the website to permanently register your sentiments.

FAMILY QUIET TIME

The family requests a quiet family time following the burial. There will be no repast. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.



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