



Mr. Robert Marion Berry

August 27, 1942 - May 19, 2023

Robert Marion Berry went home, as he was longing to do, on May 19, 2023. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn Lowe Berry, daughter, Ann Coggin (Jim), son, Mitch Berry (Sarah), and grandchildren, James Coggin (Erin), Caroline Grieser (Brad), Lauren Berry, Mitchell Berry and great-grandson, Jack Coggin. Marion is also survived by his much-loved brother, Mark Berry, and Mark's special friend, Susan Coit, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law, Martha and Tom Cameron, Tammy Berry Davidson, and Billy Gan Spratlin, nieces and nephews and great nieces and nephews and a lively company of first cousins and their descendants. He was preceded in death by his parents, Lloyd and Eleanor Berry, brother, Rusty Berry, sister, Dorothy Spratlin, in-laws, Bob and Josephine Lowe, sister-in-law, Sue Berry, and many from his large, close extended family. The circle is unbroken and continues to grow much to Marion's joy.

Marion was born August 27, 1942 in Stuttgart, Arkansas. He grew up in Bayou Meto, first attending a two-room schoolhouse a short horse ride from his home and later graduating from DeWitt High School. Marion's affection for Bayou Meto was evident to all who heard him tell stories of the One-Horse Store and all the lessons learned there. Marion's connection to Bayou Meto continued through his long membership at Red Bluff Hunting Club where he and his brothers maintained their friendships forged at the Bayou Meto school all their adult lives.

Marion attended the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville for two years, before marrying his sweetheart since 7th grade, the love of his life, Carolyn Lowe in 1962. After their marriage, Marion transferred to the University of Arkansas School of Medical Sciences in Little Rock and graduated with a degree in Pharmacy. He began an enjoyable career as a pharmacist at Don's West Markham Pharmacy and he continued to enjoy close friendship with the Don's Pharmacy family throughout his life.

In 1967, Marion had an opportunity to move back to Arkansas County to pursue his life-calling, farming, and he took it. For 34 years Marion farmed rice, soybeans, corn and wheat near Gillett with every fiber of his being. Marion was an innovator, developing irrigation systems, implementing conservation practices, and constantly studying new developments and marketing opportunities for his family farm. Marion and Carolyn worked hand in hand to manage a family farm, raise two children, care for extended family and enjoy the great friendships of neighbors, and serve their community. Marion was a deeply loving and affectionate father. He involved the whole family in the farm and every other endeavor he undertook. He instilled a sense of identity and purpose and cast vision for the difference his children could make in the world. He was their biggest fan.

One of Marion's favorite quotes was from author William Alexander Percy, who wrote: "I guess a man's job is to make the world a better place to live in, so far as he is able—always remembering the results will be infinite—and to attend to his own soul." In that spirit, Marion constantly endeavored to improve daily life and opportunities in Arkansas County. During these years, he was active in the Gillett city government as an alderman, Gillett Farmer's and Businessman's Club, Gillett United Methodist Church, Arkansas County Farmers' Cooperative as a board member, the Democratic Party of Arkansas, and he served on the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

Marion was especially known for his work promoting the Gillett Coon Supper as an important political event in the state. Watching Gillett shine on the second Friday of January was a delight to him.

In 1994, Marion accepted a job with President Clinton's Administration as Special Assistant for Agricultural Trade and Food Assistance in Washington, DC. He also served on the White House Domestic Policy Council. This was quite a change in life from the farm, but Marion and Carolyn embraced it enthusiastically. In 1996, Marion ran successfully to represent the First District of Arkansas in the United

States Congress. In the Congress, Marion was proudly part of the Blue Dog Democratic Caucus and the Faith and Politics Institute. The people of his district were always on his heart during these years, and he leveraged all his energy and relationships into representing them and helping them thrive. He worked tirelessly to promote Arkansas and agriculture, to lower prescription drug prices for seniors, and to help Arkansans of all walks of life navigate the federal bureaucracy. Possibly the greatest joy of his congressional career is the young staff people he mentored. Marion taught many a staffer punctuality and "double -get-it" driving, as well as how to serve the people of the First District with excellence. He and Carolyn loved these congressional staff members deeply and the affection was returned. Marion's family is grateful for the friendship of each congressional staff member, many of whom continued to connect with him through his long years of illness. He gratefully served seven terms in the Congress before retiring to his beloved Gillett in 2011.

During his Washington years, Marion took on the most enjoyable job of his life, the job of Grandad to four adoring grandchildren. He taught them how to hunt, drive, tell a good story, and even tried to teach one of his grandkids how to shoot craps, much to the dismay of the casino staff. He was their instructor

and their playmate and their chief adventure guide, making sure they came to love Arkansas County as much as he did. In these later years, he enjoyed the love of two bonus grandchildren, Hugo and Harlow, as well.

As Marion stepped back into the rhythm of daily life on the farm after retirement, he began having troubling health symptoms and for the next 12 years, he patiently endured and bravely faced diagnosis after diagnosis and limitation after limitation. Two things crystallized for Marion in these years. First, the high view of God that had led Marion since childhood became his great comfort. God was proven to be a very present help in this long time of trouble. No matter the circumstance, Marion's life refrain was "I am blessed beyond what I deserve." Second, his love for his family, especially his wonderful Carolyn, became his favorite topic of conversation.

The Berry family wishes to express heartfelt gratitude to every doctor and nurse and CNA who treated Marion at DeWitt City Hospital, UAMS, Mayo Clinic and Hospice Home Care, the team of home caregivers who attended him, and to the entire staff of The House of Three for tender care for Marion in these most recent months. Also, the Berry family acknowledges with thanksgiving to God, the millions of prayers said on his behalf during his long disability. God has heard every single one and He has answered with the sustaining and saving power of His righteous right hand. To God be the Glory for the amazing life and eternal life of Marion Berry.

A memorial worship service will be held for Marion on Saturday, June 24 at 1:00 p.m. at the Gillett Methodist Church, 310 Leslie Avenue, Gillett, AR with a reception to follow.

Memorials could be made to DeWitt City Hospital Auxiliary, P. O. Box 32, DeWitt, AR 72042, UAMS Auxiliary Patient Support Fund at WPRCI Auxiliary Patient Support, 4301 W. Markham #721-1, Little Rock, AR 72205, or Gillett

Methodist Church, P. O. Box 88, Gillett, AR 72055.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUN **24**. 1:00 PM (CT)

Gillett United Methodist Church
301 W Leslie Ave
Gillett, AR 72055
(870) 548-2574

Tribute Wall



“ Chris M. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Robert Marion Berry.

Chris M. - June 24, 2023 at 10:33 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert Marion Berry.



June 12, 2023 at 03:54 PM



“ Patty, Tom, Chase and Jane Schoelkopf purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Mr. Robert Marion Berry.



Patty, Tom, Chase and Jane Schoelkopf - June 11, 2023 at 04:04 PM



“ Sandra And Larry Childers lit a candle in memory of Mr. Robert Marion Berry



Sandra and Larry Childers - May 26, 2023 at 09:59 AM

CC

“ Many memory's with my friend Marion & Bayou Meto Irrigation Dist. & other economic dev. projects in the first dist. and Arkansas. Other memnorie range with Carolyn and firnds she har from L:onoke she had when we were seniors in high school.(ie. Mary Bransford) Charlie Cummings- and my wife whom I lost last year- Joy Montgomery.

Charlie Cummings - May 23, 2023 at 05:37 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert Marion Berry.



May 23, 2023 at 05:25 PM

BB

“ Carolyn and family, we were so sad to learn of Marion's death. It was an honor to know him as both our dear friend and Arkansas's outstanding representative in Congress. He will be greatly missed by the many lives he touched.
Bruce & Sherry Burrow

Bruce & Sherry Burrow - May 23, 2023 at 05:07 PM

SH

“ It was an absolute honor to serve the boss, and the people of the 1st District, in his office in D.C. I am so grateful for the experience, his kindness, trust, wisdom - and having Ms. Carolyn nearby as well. My heart is holding you all close.

Shoshana - May 22, 2023 at 02:02 PM

PD

“ *Prentice And Sue Davis lit a candle in memory of Mr. Robert Marion Berry*



Prentice and Sue Davis - May 22, 2023 at 08:53 AM

PD

Mr Berry was always a good man

Prentice and Sue Davis - May 22, 2023 at 08:55 AM

BW

“ *Bertha Woods lit a candle in memory of Mr. Robert Marion Berry*



Bertha Woods - May 21, 2023 at 09:51 PM

ED

“ *A true Arkansan and delightful person to meet and visit with!! Marion Berry will truly be missed by many!! Love and prayers for Carolyn and his many family members and friends!! Arkansas has definitely lost a true gem!!* ❤️❤️



Ester Hageman, LPN DCH - May 21, 2023 at 10:35 AM