



## Obituary

**Born:** Friday, January 26, 1912

**Died:** Wednesday, January 23, 2013

The era of a remarkable lady has passed with the death of Mary Baker Black Rice on January 23, 2013. She leaves a legacy of service to her church, her family, and her community.

Mrs. Rice was born on January 26, 1912 in Sylvania, Georgia, one of three children of the late Elizabeth Wyche and Thomas Jerrold Black. She received her early education in Sylvania and graduated from Woman's College of Georgia with a major in history and English. For several years she taught school in Oliver and Tate, Georgia and came to Vidalia in 1937 to teach social studies.

In Vidalia she met and married her beloved husband, the late William Capers Rice, a widower with three children. Their family increased with the addition of two daughters and two sons, making the home one which was filled with laughter and good times with the proper temperance of discipline and love. Her support as a den mother, a Scout leader, and a PTA president kept Mrs. Rice abreast of the activities and needs of the young people. The Rice home was a gathering place for the young of all ages, as well as for the peers of Mr. and Mrs. Rice. She was an avid reader, especially books on history and biographies. She was known to say she even enjoyed a few Danielle Steele novels in her later years.

Mrs. Rice's faith in God and her devotion to her church were evident by her contributions of time and talents in the Vidalia Presbyterian church, where she served as a Deacon and as an Elder. She served as president of the Women of the Church and as a circle leader.

Mary Baker Rice stood tall in support of her nation and was a pioneer in the South to get women involved in politics. She encouraged participation in the process of elections, at city, county, state, and national levels. A strong supporter of the Republican Party, Mrs. Rice attended the National Republican Convention in 1960 in Chicago, Illinois as a delegate and also attended a conference at the White House in 1981. Not one to suggest, but one to do, Mrs. Rice was the first woman elected to serve on the Toombs County Board of Commissioners and served until she retired after the completion of her fourth term. Serving as Republican National Committeewoman for Georgia from 1960 to 1964, Mary Baker Rice opened doors of encouragement by example in support of the two-party system in Georgia.

When, in 1979, the local paper conducted a poll to determine the most significant Vidaliens of the Century, Mary Baker Rice was the only woman to be so honored. Also, in 1979,

## Service Summary

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### Visitation

5:00 PM to 7:00 PM, Fri Jan 25, 2013

### Vidalia Chapel

1722 Mt Vernon Road  
Vidalia, Georgia 30474

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### Funeral Service

2:30 PM Sat Jan 26, 2013

### Vidalia Presbyterian Church

400 Church Street  
Vidalia, Georgia 30475

Mrs. Rice was named Vidalia's "Lady of the Year". In addition to work with her church and her involvement in family affairs and politics, she also left her mark as a member of the Toombs County Board of Health and as a member of the Altamaha Planning and Development Commission. She was a charter member and past president of the Pine Ridge Garden Club and was past president of the Vidalia Woman's Club. The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution held a special place in her activities. She joined the DAR through the Vidalia Chapter in 1940, served as a Chapter Regent, and filled the office of Chapter Chaplain for more than 40 years. She has been a member of the DAR longer than any other member in the Chapter.

She is survived by her children: Jane Pickren, Elizabeth (Glenn) Goode, Allen (Nancy) Rice, David (Carol) Rice, and Claudia (Mike) Walton. She is also survived by her grandchildren: Beth Cross, Bill Rice, Madolyn (Ron) Bryant, Louise (Dan) Rushing, Linda (Rodney) Newton, David K. Rice, Amy (Ken) Myers, Rebecca King, Lillian (Matt) Raben, Ellen Rice, Daniel Rice, Will Rice, Allen (Kate) Walton, Bill Walton and her brother Thomas Jerrold Black, Jr. She is also survived by 9 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren. She is predeceased by 2 children William Capers Rice, Jr., Dick Rice, grandson Scott Rice, and by a brother Weldon Black. She is also survived by her faithful caregiver and very special friend, Gardenia Tobler.

Friends are invited to celebrate Mrs. Rice's life with family members at Ronnie L. Stewart Funeral Service from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Friday, January 25, 2013. Funeral services will be held at the Vidalia Presbyterian Church on Saturday, January 26, 2013 at 2:30 p.m. with the Reverend Kevin Hicks officiating. Interment will follow in Pinecrest Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial remembrances may be made to the Vidalia Presbyterian Church, 400 Church Street, Vidalia, GA 30474.

Ronnie L. Stewart Funeral Service of Vidalia is in charge of funeral arrangements.