



Thelma Marie McWhirter

NOV 11, 1929 - FEB 20, 2023



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MEMORIAL PARK
Funeral Home & Cemetery

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Thelma Marie McWhirter

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It is with great sorrow that the family of Thelma Marie McWhirter announces her passing on February 20, 2023, at The Village of Germantown at the age of 93. Marie was born in November of 1929 in Pontotoc, Mississippi to Melvin C. and Vera Beatrice (Bea) Rea.

Marie was born to a family of farmers at the beginning of the Depression. She suffered many hardships early in her early life, including the loss of two brothers and a baby sister, but she developed a mental toughness and unfaltering determination at an early age that with God's help tomorrow would be a better day.

When she was only 16, she married the love of her life James David McWhirter (Mac). Marie and Mac then moved to Memphis with \$50 they borrowed from her father. After arriving in Memphis, Marie began working at Sears Crosstown in catalog sales. Being an absolute whiz at numbers, her talent in finance was quickly identified and within three years, she was promoted to Executive Assistant to the Branch Manager at Sears Crosstown.

In 1951, Marie gave birth to her beautiful and sweet daughter, Beverly Ann. Unfortunately, Beverly had cerebral palsy; This was before health care insurance and Beverly's care required an enormous monetary commitment from Marie and Mac. Both parents worked two jobs, while Marie's mother stepped up to help as caregiver.

Marie continued her career at Sears until the early 1960's in various roles including modeling for catalogs.

In 1957, Mac started his own business, Mid-South Scale Company (later known as Tri-State Scale Company), which serviced large industrial truck scales. By the early sixties, Marie had obtained her GED and taking classes at Memphis State University. Within a year, she became the Executive Assistant to the Chair of the Psychology Department and eventually worked for First Tennessee Bank..



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In 1963 she left the bank to start Marie's Dress Shop in Whitehaven. The business thrived as she developed a loyal customer base. On any afternoon, five or six ladies would sit at a table and chairs in the center of the store drinking coffee, chatting, and shopping. Marie traveled to shop for merchandise at markets in New York and Dallas many times a year. She had an excellent sense of fashion and listened carefully to her customer needs. She truly loved customers and friends. She had a kind demeanor, and a sophisticated sense of style. Her business remained open until the early 90's.

Marie and Mac traveled extensively during the 70's and 80's. Some of their favorite destinations were Monte Carlo and Las Vegas. A fun and charismatic couple, they made friends wherever they went and enjoyed taking trips in their Airstream mobile home to visit and sightsee. During the summer and holiday weekends, you could find them on their pontoon boat at Sardis Lake with friends, family, and a bucket of fried chicken.

Upon retirement, she turned much of her attention to Mac's care. Mac passed away in late 1995. After his passing, Marie refocused her love and efforts on her family. With her sister Dell Betts, she traveled across the U.S. to elder hostels and enjoyed these years immensely. Every year, Marie would rent a beachside condominium for a month and invite her siblings David, Dell, and Dot along with their families and other extended family to visit.

Having come from so little means, Marie wanted to secure the future of her family. For everyone in the family, Marie would assist with tuition costs for schooling and university studies. She encouraged them to obtain the best education they could and to love what they studied. She often told us, "Life can take away your house, your savings, and your job, but it can never take away your education." "With a good education and ambition you can always come back stronger and better." She was the Matriarch of our family, and an unfaltering advocate for those she loved.

She lived a life filled with love, travel, and many friends. Words cannot express the love her family has for this wonderful woman. Marie will be eternally remembered by her brother, David Rea and his wife, Judy Rea; her nieces Deborah Kay Betts, Jeanne Marie Rea Fenster (Andrew), Kathryn Rea Lewis (Stephen), Lynda Parrott (Jim), and her nephews Tom Betts, and James Lee Dotson (Susan). She is also survived by 4 great nieces: Bennett Rea Christensen (Mike), Frances Dotson, Callie Dotson, Alexandria Skinner (Joe), Christee Herbert, Amanda Mathis, and 7 great nephews: Hayden Betts, Jack Hilley (Melissa), Sam Fenster, Menashe Fenster, Naftali Fenster, Binyamin Fenster, William Lewis.



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She was preceded in death by her siblings: Christeen Mathis, Mary Ladell (Dell) Betts, Dorothy Jean Dotson, Margaret Ann Rea, James Columbus Rea and Melvin Columbus Rea, Jr. and her nephew Jimmy Mathis,

The family wants to acknowledge the wonderful care provided to Marie by the staff at The Village of Germantown for the past two years.

A private memorial service will be held on March 4th, 2023, at Memorial Park Funeral Home at 5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN 38119 at 2 PM, visitation will be from Noon to 2 PM. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that all donations be made in her honor to United Cerebral Palsy at www.ucp.org or to the charity of their choice.



Events


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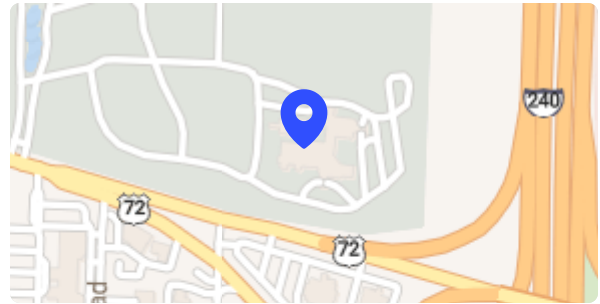
Visitation

 **Saturday**, March 4, 2023

 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM cst

 **Memorial Park Funeral Home Parkside Event Center**

5668 Poplar Ave, Memphis TN 38119



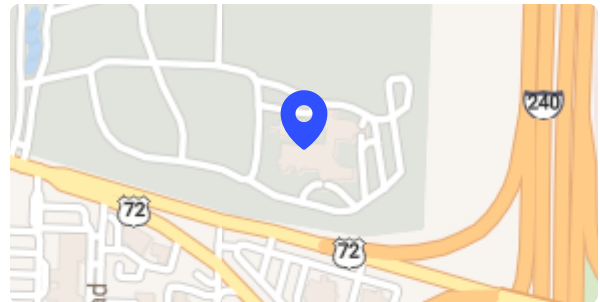
Funeral Service

 **Saturday**, March 4, 2023


 2:00 PM cst

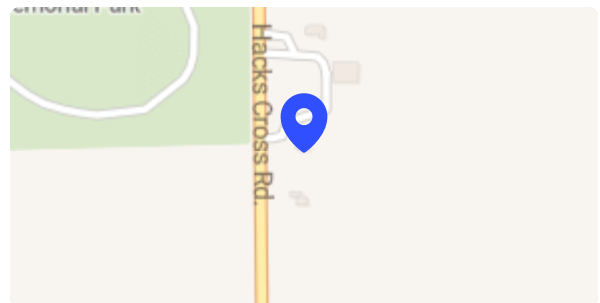
 **Memorial Park Fireside Chapel**

5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis TN 38119



Cemetery Details

 **Memorial Park Southwoods Cemetery**
5484 Hacks Cross Rd, Memphis TN 38125





Tribute Wall

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Jim, Lynda, & Christee sent a Divine Peace Bouquet to the McWhirter family.



March 2 at 10:22 AM



Anonymous sent a Beautiful in Blue to the McWhirter family.



March 1 at 3:20 AM



Anonymous sent a Treasured Lilies Spray to the McWhirter family.



February 25 at 1:23 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thelma by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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