



Marilyn Tonkinson Dillard

February 27, 1936 - March 7, 2026

Marilyn Tonkinson Dillard, beloved mother, grandmother, and devoted servant of others, passed away on March 7, 2026, at the age of 90.

Born on February 27, 1936, in Farmington, New Mexico, affectionately referred to by Marilyn as “God’s Country”, she was the fourth of five daughters born to Mark and Sara Tonkinson. Marilyn graduated from Farmington High School and began working before meeting and marrying James C. Dillard of Abilene, Texas, in 1957. After their marriage, the couple first lived in Farmington before moving to Cortez, Colorado. They later settled in Texas, living in Houston and Beaumont before ultimately making their home in Liberty in 1968, where they raised their two children, Clinton Lee Dillard and Julie Dillard Haralson.

Marilyn was preceded in death by her beloved son, Clint, in 1985, and her loving husband, Jim, in 1996.

Marilyn spent 20 years in the oil and gas industry before retiring from Mobil Oil in 1995. Following her retirement and the passing of her husband, Jim, she moved to West Houston to be closer to her family, where she spent some of the most cherished years of her life.

Her greatest joy was her family, her daughter Julie and son-in-law Richard,

and especially her beloved grandchildren, Grant Haralson and Abigail Haralson, whom she adored beyond measure. Her grandchildren were truly the center of her world, and nothing brought her more happiness than cheering them on and attending their activities, especially listening to them sing in the Wesley Choir on Sunday mornings at Chapelwood United Methodist Church (UMC).

Marilyn lived an active and vibrant life. In her younger years and throughout adulthood, she enjoyed tennis, softball, bowling, fishing, and long walks. After moving to Liberty, she quickly found friendship and community by joining a softball team and later a bowling league, where she formed lifelong friendships. Bowling remained one of her great passions, and she proudly bowled in leagues for nearly 60 years.

Those who knew Marilyn will remember her as a woman of remarkable strength and character. She was full of spunk and independence, with a quiet resolve to always do her best. She deeply valued her friendships and had a special gift for finding the good in others. Her warmth, loyalty, and genuine kindness made her a treasured friend to many.

A woman of deep faith, Marilyn devoted much of her retirement to serving others. She was an active and devoted member of Chapelwood UMC, where she faithfully served in the Kitchen Ministry as a proud member of the Red Apron Ladies. She volunteered as the Second Sunday Chicken cashier, participated on the Third Tuesday Chicken Team, and served on the church Reception Team. As a member of the "A Place for You" Sunday School class, she participated in numerous service projects, including Rice & Beans for Fair Haven and the Spring Branch Food Pantry. She also found great purpose supporting Center Street Ministries in downtown Houston, led by Ivan Rhone, helping serve those most in need.

Her compassionate heart extended to all living creatures. Marilyn was known for caring for any animal that appeared at her door—feeding and tending to possums, raccoons, feral cats, squirrels, birds, and more. Her kindness and concern for the vulnerable reflected her deep love for God and others.

Outside of her volunteer work, Marilyn enjoyed tending her garden, where her remarkable green thumb produced a variety of vegetables, including carrots, tomatoes, and potatoes. She was also an enthusiastic sports fan who loved cheering on the Houston Astros, Houston Texans, and the University of Texas football team. She rarely missed a good game show, especially Wheel of Fortune and 25 Words or Less.

Even at 90, Marilyn’s mind remained sharp. Her mornings were often spent completing the Houston Chronicle crossword puzzle and playing daily New York Times Games with her family, including Wordle, Connections, and Strands.

Marilyn will be remembered for her generous heart, unwavering faith, and the deep love she had for her family and friends. Strong, spirited, and determined, she lived a life of service and compassion, always seeking ways to help others and brighten someone’s day. Though she will be deeply missed, her family finds comfort in knowing that she is now reunited with loved ones who have gone before her and rests peacefully in the presence of the Lord.

In lieu of flowers, Marilyn requested that donations be made to K-9 Angels Rescue of Houston <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/k-9-angels-rescue> and The Chapelwood Foundation <https://www.shelbygiving.com/App/Form/f1cb72f1-a1dc-4faa-8899-96f19c6dfe14>

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

— 2 Timothy 4:7

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 20. 2:00 PM (CT)

Chapelwood United Methodist Church
11140 Greenbay Street
Houston, TX 77024

Reception to Follow Service

MAR 20 (CT)

Chapelwood United Methodist Church
11140 Greenbay Street
Houston, TX 77024

Tribute Wall



“ *Laura J. purchased the Sentiments of Serenity S
pray for the family of Marilyn Tonkinson Dillard.*



Laura J. - March 15 at 06:26 PM