



## Mary Ann Martino Ciarella

December 30, 1921 - May 11, 2015

Mary Ann Martino Ciarella was born on December 30, 1921, to John Martino and Antonina Ethelene “Lena” Loria. Her father died when she was three, and her mother married Chris Couras, who was a beloved stepfather. Mary Ann attended Sam Houston High School where she was an honor student and represented her school at the University of Houston Beauty Pageant. She later managed the bakery department at Henke & Pillot Supermarket and helped the bakery department gross its highest profit ever, which proved to be an invaluable experience for a future grocery store owner.

In 1939 Mary Ann was set up on a blind date. She and her date went out with another couple, who were also on a blind date. Unfortunately, Mary Ann was not attracted to her date, but she and the other man on the blind date, Willie Ciarella, were immediately attracted to one another. They began to date and stayed together while Willie was sent to Europe during World War II. He returned to Houston on brief leave and married Mary Ann on June 7, 1942. They were married for sixty-two years.

Once the war ended, Willie and Mary Ann took over his parents’ grocery store and named it “Willie’s Food Market.” After eight years they sold it and started Sunset Heights Food Market. They were active members of the Retail Grocery Association and were in the grocery business for thirty-six years. Their customers quickly became some of their dearest friends.

Mary Ann's greatest joy and pastime was helping low income and elderly persons obtain benefits. She was a master at gathering information that others were unaware of and using that information to educate them regarding their options for future assistance.

Mary Ann was just as active in her retirement as she was while working. She loved to cook and her famous spaghetti, suga, sausage, and homemade garlic bread were enjoyed by her family for years each Thanksgiving. In fact, Mary Ann was so fond of cooking that she wrote and self-published a recipe book in which she had gathered over two hundred recipes from family members. She made it a point to dress to the nines and never could have too much bling. She loved to accessorize and wore a different flower in her hair to match each outfit.

Someone once said of Mary Ann, "She's not a card, she's the whole deck," and no phrase could better epitomize her. She was extremely proud that she could say insults in many languages, and many unsuspecting shop owners and waiters became victims of her acid tongue. In addition, she found no greater joy in life than getting things for free. She once said, "The only thing better than the dollar store is the 99 cent store, and the only thing better than that is free!" She played in every sweepstakes, put her name in every box when a prize was offered, and loved to play the lottery. She also enjoyed gambling, and some of her fondest memories were playing in slot machine tournaments in Vegas.

Those who met Mary Ann one time never forgot her, and her wit and determination will leave a legacy for years to come. Mary Ann is preceded in death by her husband, Willie Ciarella. She is survived by her son Joe Ciarella, and his wife Tami; son Chris Ciarella; granddaughter Shanna Gosey and her husband Jeff.

The family will receive friends Saturday, the 16th of May 2015, from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. at Dettling Funeral Home, 14094 Memorial Drive in Houston. A funeral service will immediately follow the viewing. A private family interment will be held later in the day.

In lieu of customary remembrances, a donation can be made to the Wounded Warriors Fund at [www.woundedwarriorsproject.org/donate](http://www.woundedwarriorsproject.org/donate) in Mary Ann's honor.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAY 16. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Dettling Funeral Home  
14094 Memorial Drive  
Houston, TX 77079  
(281) 497-2121  
david@dettlingfuneral.com

## Service

MAY 16. 11:00 AM (CT)

Dettling Funeral Home  
14094 Memorial Drive  
Houston, TX 77079  
(281) 497-2121  
david@dettlingfuneral.com

# Tribute Wall



“ *Mary Ann Martino Ciarella*

October 08, 2023 at 10:52 AM



“ *Mary Ann Martino Ciarella*

October 06, 2023 at 01:12 AM



“ *Mary Ann Martino Ciarella*

October 05, 2023 at 09:45 AM



“ *Mary Ann Martino Ciarella*

October 05, 2023 at 01:54 AM



“ *Loved the story about this Sweet Italian Jewel! Motivates me!  
Prayers for the Family!!*

**Jacquie Weido** - May 15, 2015 at 09:07 PM



“ *Our thoughts & prayers are with you at this time. Mary Ann was  
such a wonderful, aring person. We will always remember her with a  
smile. She will be missed. Sincerely Dean & Becky Brown*

**Dean & Becky Brown** - May 15, 2015 at 05:04 PM



“ *Blooming Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Mary Ann Martino Ciarella.*



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May 15, 2015 at 10:34 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Mary Ann Martino Ciarella.*



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May 14, 2015 at 08:03 PM