



Mary Hurst Cooksey

May 15, 1937 - March 1, 2026

Mary Hurst Cooksey, 88, a woman of profound faith and a nurturing spirit passed away on Sunday, March 1, 2026.

Mary was born on May 15, 1937, in Centralia, Illinois to Harry and Mildred Hurst. She is preceded in death by her beloved husband, Larry Cooksey; son, John Cooksey; parents, Harry and Mildred Hurst; sister, Ann Bennett; brother-in-law, Harley Bennet; and sister-in-law, Mary Hurst. She is survived by her son, Tom Cooksey (Tina); daughter, Jane Miller (Sam); grandchildren, James Cooksey (Karli), Jenna Kaster (Shane), Jessica Cooksey (Josh), Michael Miller (Clara), and Samantha Miller; great-granddaughter, Charlotte Kaster; and her brothers, Don Hurst, Steve Hurst (Jane), and Michael Hurst (Karen).

Mary grew up in Centralia, Illinois, alongside her four siblings living a life filled with fun, hard work, and many opportunities for learning. The love they shared resulted in many joyful visits and reunions throughout the years. As the eldest sister, she held a special place in her brothers' lives, and they in hers—a bond rooted in love that only siblings can share.

After falling in love with her high school sweetheart, Larry, their plans led to marriage in 1957 and a life filled with many shared adventures. Together, they attended the University of Illinois, where Mary studied chemical engineering, an impressive feat for a woman in the 50's. Her studies were later set aside as

she embraced what became a wonderful life supporting Larry and raising her family throughout his lifelong career with Shell Oil Company. In 1959, their first move was to Houston, Texas, quickly followed by many more moves across the United States—including Illinois, Montana, New Jersey, California, Alabama, and eventually back to Texas—where they remained for over 40 years.

Mary was deeply involved in her children's lives and led by example. She volunteered for school events, worked concession stands at baseball games, served as a den mother for her sons' Cub Scout troop, and shuttled her children to their many activities. Most importantly, she was always present—offering love, wisdom, and strength whenever it was needed.

Mary worked for several years at Horizon Travel Agency, where her love for travel was reignited. She and Larry explored the world together with incredible friends on memorable trips to China, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and Japan.

Mary so enjoyed her many friends, and they meant the world to her, with relationships spanning decades. Her sisters in Chapter DU will always hold a very special place in her heart, as will her Walnut Bend friends and Garden Club members. The “Hey Lollies” square dancers were a joyful part of their retirement years, along with multiple book clubs and bridge groups that brought her great happiness. Mary enjoyed reading, playing cards, hooking rugs, and volunteering at church.

Mary's faith was the foundation of her life. She was an incredible role model living out her faith daily through service to others. She was devoted to reading, studying, and volunteering at church, from her early involvement with Meals on Wheels in the 1970s to later serving as a Stephen Minister. She loved her church deeply and her Sunday School class held a very special

place in her heart. Her love and dedication to the Lord have carried on through the next two generations.

When she was forced to leave her home of 40 years after Hurricane Harvey, Mary did so with grace and strength, moving into The Abbey and beginning yet another meaningful chapter in her life. There, she reconnected with old neighbors and formed new friendships. The fourth floor became a particularly special place, filled with love, book club gatherings, and many educational and joyful happy hours.

Cats and dogs were always present in Mary's home. In her final days, she was comforted by her constant companion, Miss Susie, a rescue cat she adopted several years ago.

Her grandchildren meant everything to Mary, and she loved them with all her heart. She always looked forward to the next visit—whether by phone or in person—greeting them with warmth and big hugs. The beach was her favorite place to spend time with her grandchildren, where traditions rooted in love flourished year after year. For over 40 years, Mary and Larry hosted “Cooksey Beach Week” in Galveston. All were welcome with great food, meaningful conversation, and endless laughter in full supply. Countless treasured memories were made.

Mary's legacy of love, learning, and listening will continue through her family and community. Her grandchildren remain her greatest legacy—a testament to the life she lived and the many lives she touched.

A Memorial Service beginning at 10:00 AM will be held Saturday, May 16, 2026, at Memorial Drive United Methodist Church 12955 Memorial Dr. Houston, TX 77079 with reception to follow in Friendship Court.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a charitable donation in Mary's honor to MD Anderson Cancer Center, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, or P.E.O. International (www.peointernational.org, Giving Opportunities; please reference Chapter DU/TX).

Mary will be deeply missed and forever remembered.

Upcoming Events

Memorial Service

MAY **16**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Memorial Drive United Methodist Church
12955 Memorial Drive
Houston, TX
<http://www.mdumc.org>

Tribute Wall

RG

“ When I was 13, I flew by myself to visit my Cooksey family. One of my best memories is of Aunt Mary taking us to Galveston to the beach for the day. She was so beautiful, watching us play and have fun. Growing up in the Midwest, this was my first exposure to the Gulf and the beginning of my love of the panhandle. I credit Aunt Mary for my crave of the beach and the uncountable trips south to seek the sand and surf. She brought me so much peace throughout my life from this day trip turning into a love story of the gulf.

Rachel Gubbins - April 06 at 10:27 PM

LI

“ Mary was always a gentle, loving, kind woman. I admired my aunt greatly. I never heard her say an unkind word but I also recognized that she possessed a quiet strength that I tried to emulate. I have so many lovely memories of growing up and being an adult as a part of the family.

Laura Ann Irwin - April 04 at 08:09 AM

JH

“ I could fill pages of happy memories of Mary. Beach weeks where we enjoyed her Ham salad for lunch and Charades in the evening. Christmas after Christmas when Steve, Taylor, Anne & I drove to Houston and Mary & Larry always made us feel so welcomed. But my best memory of Mary was a phone conversation we had after my sister, Marty, passed. Several days later I received a book from her in the mail “Jesus Calling”. It’s 365 days of devotionals. I’m reading it for the 10th time. Every year I read something that speaks to me in a totally new way. Mary ministered in a quiet, unobtrusive way. I didn’t know that book was what I needed, but Mary did. I think of her everyday.

The Mary and Larry Cooksey family is so special to us. And, for me, Mary will forever be a blessing in my life. ❤️ Jane

Jane Hurst - April 03 at 11:07 AM

SH

“ One evening when I was very little, 3 or 4 years old, Mary was giving me a bath at 153 Pullen Blvd. I asked Mary what her middle name was. She told me it was Frank, because mom and dad wanted a boy. It was sometime long after I learned it was Francis. What a lovely sense of humor. Steve

Steve Hurst - April 03 at 10:27 AM

GW

I went to high school with Mary and we have kept in touch for most of the last seventy years. We have not seen each other since 2000, though. The last I talked to her she said, “I guess we will see each other in heaven.

Mary was our prom queen and so smart. She was always kind and had keen sense of humor. I wish we could have seen more of each other. See you in heaven, Mary. Love Gretchen

Gretchen Wrigley - April 13 at 02:03 PM