



## Dora Derr Wilkins

October 2, 1931 - November 22, 2021

Dora Derr Wilkins, 90, finished her earthly life on November 22, 2021. She was born on October 2, 1931 to Hugh Henry and Ima Jeanne Derr near Quitman, Texas and passed away in Tyler. She leaves four children, Melissa Wilkins Brigman and her husband George of Tyler; Chris Wilkins and his wife Michele of Plano; Jonathan Wilkins and his wife Cheri of Plano; and Dorian Wilkins Villa and her husband Robert of Kerrville. She had three grandchildren, Yuri Brigman, Ashley Montgomery and Tyler Wilkins and one great-grandchild, James Montgomery.

A private family graveside service will be held at Rose Lawn Cemetery under the direction of Stewart Family Funeral Home. The family suggests memorials in Dora's memory be made to Marvin UMC Missions, 300 W. Erwin St., Tyler, Texas 75702.

Mom believed first and foremost in God, serving others, and in the importance of education at all levels. Our family was raised in the United Methodist faith in Tyler where we were all involved in various activities; her time being primarily spent in the area of missions, women's groups, and prayer circles. Being of service to others, whether by helping a neighbor, going on a mission or youth trip, delivering Meals on Wheels, or sewing play clothes for children in need, all tasks were of great importance to our mom which she constantly reinforced in our family.

Education was just second nature to Mom. All four of us, her children, completed college degrees and beyond; it never occurred to us that there was another option than to attend college! She taught in some capacity most of the years of her adult life. Her ancestors, the Derr family, came from Germany in the 1800's and as German was frequently spoken, she picked it up. She then studied it further in school. At Christmas, Mom would sing carols to us in German and it sounded so otherworldly.

She learned all about plants from her grandfather who ran a nursery near Quitman. He was a talented "grafter," creating new hybrid roses, teaching her along the way. She was quite a green thumb and loved being outside in the yard, constantly planting and caring for new growth. She prided herself on knowing the full and proper names of all of her plants plus any others we would point out; there was little she could not grow.

In addition, Mom loved international fashion and classically chic designers like Halston and Givenchy. As a teenager, she would board the bus in Quitman and ride up to Dallas with her younger sister, Jane, to go shopping for fabric and study the retail fashions in the finest stores. Having come from a family of talented tailors and seamstresses, she inherited the gift. All the years we were growing up, Mom was sewing costumes, curtains, play clothes, Easter outfits, and prom dresses. Many evenings she would drive up to the best retail stores in Tyler, sketch out the beautiful outfits in the window displays, and within the week, she would go to the fabric store to find the perfect textile to create her own version.

As a lifelong learner, our mom was constantly reading and studying. She saw education as an essential human right and a way to better the world. She loved history, genealogy, geography, and sociology, studying all while in college at UT Austin and Texas Woman's University in Denton. Whenever we

had a question growing up, one of her most frequent responses was “go look it up” in our huge set of Encyclopedia Britannica. She could never have imagined that life as we know it now would boil down to “googling” everything! We all remember watching Jeopardy with her throughout our lives and she rarely missed a correct answer, unless it was sports-related.

Although she said she wanted to travel all over the world, she mostly remained at home raising her family, running the household, and serving the church. She settled for watching her children branch out and travel all over the world, bringing pictures and stories back to her. In her own special way, she was very proud to have shaped and molded each of us children, believing this was the ultimate responsibility of a parent. In her words, she made sure that we became “good citizens of these United States.”

The family wishes to thank Providence Park and Hospice of East Texas for taking such good care of our mom through her later years.

# Cemetery Details

**Private Interment - Rose Lawn Cemetery**

# Tribute Wall

PA

“ I have always looked up to Dora as a truly outstanding person. I knew her when she was president of the Tyler District United Methodist Women, and when she went on to be on the Texas Conference board of the United Methodist Women. I admired her for her great knowledge and intelligence, and leadership skills. She was a wonderful, positive leader, very knowledgeable and always ready to help those who were less capable than she. She was a tireless worker and devoted to the Methodist church, all the time raising four accomplished and committed children. The world will be a lesser place without Dora Wilkins.  
Patty Andrews

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**Patty Andrews** - November 23, 2021 at 01:42 PM