



Mary Jane Howard

June 25, 1932 - February 9, 2026

Mary Jane McMillan (Mainie) Howard, who died peacefully in Tyler, Texas, on February 9, 2026, once won a car in a raffle. Of course, if you ever met her, you already knew that. Just like you knew she was born in the tiny town of Oakwood, that she had four children, and was a Texas Longhorn fan par excellence.

By the time she had relayed this vital information to you she knew where you were born and raised, if your parents were still alive, and if you were by any chance an Aggie. Twenty questions was just getting started.

She was born many weeks premature in Oakwood, Texas, and, against all odds, survived. From the time she could crawl she was a miracle inside a whirlwind.

She was the youngest of three children born to Travers and Ella Belle McMillan.

She played volleyball in high school because she got to wear a nice new uniform, but it is unclear whether she ever saw time on the court. She would later confess that she was better at cheering than playing.

She left home at sixteen to attend Sam Houston State University, which she

left after one year to attend the University of Texas at Austin. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from UT in 1952.

While in college, she met the love of her life, Robert M. "Bo" Howard, and they married in 1953. Before marrying, she started her career as a lifelong schoolteacher in Corpus Christi, Texas. No teacher who ever put chalk to chalkboard was as proud as she was of her profession. In the 1970s, she went back to school at the University of Houston to obtain her certification to teach Distributive Education. If you wanted to get her riled up, all you had to do was suggest messing with Texas teacher retirement.

She was a lifelong traveler whose preferred method of transportation was the front passenger seat of a Chevrolet Suburban. She and Bo drove from the West Coast to the East Coast and most places in between. On her first trip to New York City, when she was in her 60s, she spent a good part of her trip asking strangers on the subway where they got their purse or their shoes as if the only two possible responses were Allday's in Atlanta or Dillard's in Texarkana.

It is fair to say that the people of New York City had never seen anything like her.

Mainie Howard was a person who reserved the right to change her mind about anything and everything... and often did. She believed that any plan was subject to change, often at the last minute. She awoke many mornings in Atlanta and, unbeknownst to her family, went to bed in St Louis simply because she had never seen the Gateway Arch there.

She loved football and golf on television, the University of Texas at Austin, her four children, and, perhaps more than anything, the United Methodist Church. At the time of her death, she was a loyal member of Pollard United Methodist

Church in Tyler, Texas. Before that time, she had been a decades-long member of First United Methodist Church in Atlanta, Texas where she was a lifelong member of the Young Adult Sunday School class long after the members were “young” anything. On Sundays if she wasn't seated with Bo on the second row, directly behind Tom and Beth Mays, you had better organize the posse.

She was a strong believer in her Christian faith, and she believed that the best way to express that faith was through the United Methodist Church.

She loved Caddo Lake during any season and many of her favorite times were spent teaching grandchildren and their friends the many card games she loved to play. She would give them one practice hand, but after that, everyone was on their own. It is rumored that sometimes the pots approached \$10. If you were coming to Caddo to stay or to visit, all she asked was that you bring a roll of pennies.

Mary Jane McMillan was born on June 25, 1932, exactly six months from Christmas, which she thought was just perfect. She is survived by her four children, Brent Howard of Tyler, Texas; Rebecca Gushanas and husband Peter of Wilmington, North Carolina; Lori Cole and husband Alan of Highlands Ranch, Colorado, and Amy Blackburn and husband John Ben of College Station, Texas; ten grandchildren; and twelve great grandchildren.

A Memorial service will be held on March 14, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at Stewart Family Funeral Home in Tyler, Texas. In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to the General Fund of Pollard United Methodist Church or to a charity of your choice.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 14. 10:00 AM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Tribute Wall

DH

“ *Mainie was welcoming, open, loving, funny and forward facing. When I knew her well, I was too young to realize just how special she was, though I certainly loved her. Mary Jane and Bo together? That was always going to be a fun visit! I will treasure her always and send my sincere condolences, Danielle H*

Danielle Howard - March 06 at 08:46 PM

TF

“ *The Bounds Family purchased the A Full Life for the family of Mary Jane Howard.*



The Bounds Family - March 02 at 12:19 PM

TF

“ *The Bounds Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Jane Howard.*

The Bounds Family - March 02 at 12:19 PM

TS

“ *Mrs. Howard was my DE teacher in Atlanta. I have fond memories of her class. May her memory be a blessing to all that knew her.*



Toni Steger - February 18 at 12:45 PM

DC

“ Mary Jane Howard was my English teacher when I was in high school. I babysat her 4 children and later she and I taught Marketing / DECA at the high school. We were always very close friends and lived just around the street from each other.

She and I had made plans for me to drive down to Tyler to spend the day together this month. She seemed to be doing ok and then when I saw Brent's FB post sharing her obituary I was heart broken.

She enjoyed life and loved her children ,

I will miss her and always treasure the friendship we shared. ❤️

Dianne Clem - February 15 at 05:39 PM

BL

“ My precious forever friend showed me nothing but kindness all the days I was so very blessed to know her and boy, did we have fun! Those memories will keep me going til I see her again! ❤️❤️

Brenda Loinette - February 14 at 01:50 PM

MR

“ Mrs. Howard was my English teacher at Atlanta High School. She was such a wonderful teacher! She will be missed by so many!

Marcy Murdock Moore Ragland - February 13 at 11:06 AM

RP

“ The Howard family is a BEDROCK of Atlanta, Texas and Mary Jane, the matriarch, was their heart and soul. When you ran into her at Caddo or in Tyler, you felt like you were home. She was fun,giving and resilient with gritty determination. She passed that on. She's with God and may he be with her family. Roy Ed and Mary Price

Roy Ed Price - February 12 at 08:00 PM

CB

“ This obituary certainly captures Mary Jane well! She and I are related by marriage. Their daughter, Rebecca is married to my brother, Peter. From the moment we met at that family wedding, she and I had an instant connection. I have such fond memories of times spent with her and Bo— most often when we were both visiting the Gushanases in Key Largo, Vero Beach, Orlando, Tyler, or Hilton Head. Once, my husband and I spent a week with Mainie and Bo in beautiful San Diego — just the four of us. Our husbands liked to golf and we girls loved to shop! We finally got to experience their beloved family retreat, Caddo Lake. I don't remember being asked to bring a roll of pennies, but we had a great time nonetheless. Mainie loved her family greatly, and after a weekend with her, I felt like I knew each one a little better. She always expressed interest in what was going on in my family. We talked about faith and our respective church involvement. As the years passed, we saw less of one another, and I definitely missed her. She was kind, welcoming, and so much fun! I look forward to seeing her in heaven, where she will no doubt have scouted out all the best shops! My sympathies to Brent, Rebecca, Lori, Amy and your families. I loved your Mainie!

Carol Brannon - February 12 at 07:59 PM

KP

“ So sorry for your loss! Love and prayers for the family ❤️

Kay King Partee - February 12 at 06:57 PM

RH

“ Aunt Mary Jane is a jewel! She and Bo were huge parts of my growing up years, especially my time in Atlanta, mid 5th grade to early 9th grade. She was always so sweet to me and my mom. She will definitely be missed. Boy, the end of era.

Russ Howard - February 12 at 02:54 PM

MP

“ *Michael and Jennifer Park purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Mary Jane Howard.*



Michael and Jennifer Park - February 12 at 02:36 PM