

ESTHER MARIE McNEAL



Esther Marie McNeal was born in Pittsburgh, PA, on December 20th, 1921, to Amelia and Gustave Lindow. She was the oldest of three, including her sister, Gladys, and brother, Raymond (Buddy). Her father died from injuries sustained during the war. Her mother remarried Phillip Schuler, making Esther one of 10 children in her new family. The family grew up during the Depression years on the North Side of

Pittsburgh, where she developed her lifetime love of food. Most conversations were about what you had for supper and she spent hours in the kitchen cooking meals for her family. A self-proclaimed Tomboy, she ran track at Oliver High School.

Esther met and married her husband, George McNeal, after high school and they had four children: June, Donna (Sis), George (Skippy), and Robert (Bob). While raising her family, she worked as a technician at UPMC Passavant Hospital sterilizing and prepping instruments for operations. Even in her 80s, after retirement, she worked at Giant Eagle as a bagger (the best she claimed) and in the Little Tots play area.

She didn't enjoy retirement or relaxing, so she kept as busy as possible. An avid cooker, gambler, bowler, and Pittsburgh Pirates fan, she filled her years with friends, family, food, and yelling at the Pirates, especially over the past few decades. At 97, she lived one of her dreams when she was selected as the Pirate's "Fan of the Game." Meeting Clint Hurdle and some of the players, she had the chance to yell at them in person instead of on the TV that day. She reportedly gave him hell about his pitcher selection process!

Aside from cooking and eating food, her favorite passion was bowling. She taught her grandchildren how to bowl and spent decades forming friendships in bowling leagues. At 95, after nearly a century of working on her game, she had to retire because of hip pain. This left more time for the Pirates, specifically Andrew McCutchen. A highlight of her bowling career was being on the TV show "Bowling for Dollars" hosted by the infamous Nick Perry. She bowled two strikes and won the cash prize!

Vivacious and relentless in her positivity, she spent her life ready to go—her hair and makeup done no matter what. She always felt and seemed young, even years after she wasn't. Pointing to other old people in public (oftentimes they were younger than her), she would comment on how they let themselves go. She never gave up, despite living through many private and historical tragedies. Her humor and fire kept her going and inspired everyone else around her. She wanted, more than anything, to have fun with those she loved. Every Halloween, she decorated and dressed up with her daughter, June, and sat at a table in the driveway, handing candy out to the kids. If you asked nicely, she might even remove her teeth for you. If you offered her a baseball glove, a beer, or a joke, she would take you up on it.

Esther moved into the St. Annes Home in Greensburg seven years ago and quickly became a staff favorite. They didn't have a casino, but she could make jewelry, watch the Pirates, play Bingo, and complain about the food. She loved decorating her room for the holidays with June's help. She frequently boasted about her awards for the best-decorated room. The competition was never close.

The candy bowl in her room was always full for the staff and family, but she always had her secret stash. She claimed sugar (which she sprinkled on her salads) and butter (which she said lubed your arteries) were the secrets of her longevity. At 100, Esther received a distinctive Centurion award from the State of Pennsylvania, along with a letter from her representative, George Dunbar. And she celebrated her 100th birthday at the LIVE Casino in Greensburg, making away with \$250. They highlighted her on their website that year. She went back at 101.

Her first plan was to never die, but the butter caught up with her in the end. Her backup plan was to die peacefully in her sleep, which she did on December 27, 2023, a week after her 102nd birthday. Her family had all just visited for Christmas and her birthday.

Esther is preceded in death by her husband, George; her sons, Skippy and Bob; all siblings; granddaughters, Wendy and Lisa; and grandson, Brian. She is survived by her daughters, June and Sis; as well as five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren.

Family and friends will be welcome for visitation from 12 PM to 4 PM on Saturday, December 30th, at the **GENE H. CORL FUNERAL CHAPEL INC.**, 4335 Northern Pike, Monroeville, PA 15146. Condolences may be made at www.corlfuneralchapel.com.

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