

# MARY LAURA GARDNER



Age 96, on June 27, 2024, of Valencia, formerly Washington Township, Westmoreland County. Mary Laura was born in Loudon, TN, on July 7, 1927, the daughter of the late Arthur B. and Julia C. (Thomas) Cannon. The beloved wife of the late Richard C. Gardner, she was also preceded in death by her daughter, Susan J. Gardner Herrle; two sisters, and three brothers.

Loving mother of Richard C. (Terry) Gardner, Jr. of Washington Township, PA, Carolyn M. (Gardner) (Dwight) Dietrich of Bradford Woods, PA, William C. Gardner of Clover, SC, and son-in-law Richard P. Herrle of Wexford, PA. Proud grandmother of Timothy (Sherry) Gardner, Christopher (Shannon) Gardner, Katie (Mitch) Rapach, Elizabeth, Erik & Cara Dietrich, Laura (Barbara Glass) Herrle, Julia Herrle, and Olivia and Nicholas Gardner. Also survived by 10 great-grandchildren, Sarah & Bryson Gardner, Emily Collins, Zachary (Yulia) Collins, Kristin Albright, Ellie, Ava, Nolan and Hudson Rapach, and Hailey Gardner.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held later and all will be welcome. The date and time will be added to this online obituary.

Mary Laura was an Elder at Union Presbyterian Church in Washington Township and a Deacon at Valencia U.P. Church. She attended the Ward Belmont Conservatory where she went on to attend their Junior College earning a diploma in both Piano and Violin. A graduate of Peabody College for Teachers, now Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN, Mary Laura earned a Bachelor of Music and Master of Music with Performance in Piano. Mary Laura was a founding member of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra and was responsible for founding the string education program with the public school system of Nashville, TN. During the summers, she used her love of music and "play" as the Social Hostess at Fontana Village in the Great Smoky Mountains. There, she organized games, picnics, musical performances, and met the love of her life, Dick Gardner.

Mary Laura shared her musical gifts all her life, performing with the Westmoreland Symphony Orchestra, helping with musical programs at churches, nursing homes, and schools. Mary Laura also taught piano and violin privately her entire life, impacting students beyond just the study of music.

Mary Laura loved to travel, visiting family and friends around the world. Her zest for life continued when she moved to a patio home in the St. Barnabas Retirement Community. She continued sharing her love of music by playing the piano for social gatherings, church as well as continuing to teach piano and violin. She also loved playing games and shared this love with her many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and anyone who was up for a challenge. She was competitive, to say the least, but did occasionally have to be a gracious loser. She also helped start The Galivanters travel group at St. Barnabas and organized numerous bus trips up and down the East Coast.

Most of all, was the love she shared with her ever-growing family and her Lord. Her suggested donations would be the Valencia U.P. Church Building Fund to support their new roof (Valencia, PA), Union Presbyterian Church (Murrysville, PA), or The Lighthouse Foundation (Box 366, Bakerstown, PA).

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