



Martha Jean Wilder

July 12, 1942 - January 7, 2024

Martha Jean Wilder (81) died on January 7 at home, surrounded by her loving family. Martha lived a simple life. She wasn't rich or well known, and it would be easy to let her slip from this world without much of a ripple, her memory kept alive only by those who were closest to her. But Martha was the wonderful sort of person that our world needs more of, and her story deserves to be told.

Martha Jean Walsh was born on July 12, 1942, the fifth of six children. She spent her childhood in Louisville's Projects, raised by her father, Peter, and her mother, Mary Elizabeth. When she was just in grade school, Martha met Donald "Donnie" Wilder. Even at a young age, Donnie was tall, dark, and handsome; Martha was smitten. She and Donnie would marry at the age of 17, Martha freshly graduated from Mercy Academy and Donnie newly enlisted in the Army.

When they were 18, they welcomed their first daughter, Mary. Following in quick succession were four more daughters—Karen, Deborah, Paula, and Patricia—and a son, Robert, known as Bobby. Donnie joined the Louisville Police Department and always worked multiple jobs to make ends meet and provide for his family and his beloved wife.

Martha's life was never easy, and she dealt with more heartache than should

ever befall any one person. When her son Bobby was only 12, he died from a brain tumor, and life for Martha was never quite the same. Years later, at the young age of 48, her darling Donnie died from kidney disease. Though Martha lived for another 34 years after Donnie's passing, he remained the love of her life. His pictures were framed around her house, and she was often found absentmindedly scribbling "Martha loves Donnie" on scraps of paper. For years, Martha, who was barely five feet tall, wrapped herself in 6-foot-4 Donnie's worn flannel shirts, just to feel close to him. Their love wasn't glamorous, but it was good and true. We should all be so lucky to experience a love like Donnie and Martha's.

Though she never fully recovered from the loss of Donnie and Bobby—and later from the losses of her five siblings, all whom she outlived—Martha still found joy in life's simple things. She finished each night with a strong drink (easy on the Diet Coke, heavy on the Maker's Mark). She found peace spending weekends with her daughters and many grandchildren at the little cabin (fondly referred to as "Don-Mar Manor") that she and Donnie had on Rough River Lake. She knew what was going on in the lives of every one of her many friends, neighbors, and family members, and was certain to keep them all on her prayer list. She enjoyed Friday evenings at Check's Cafe in Germantown with her friends and family. And heaven help you if you interrupted her while she was watching her Kentucky Wildcats play basketball, as she was their most dedicated fan. (But, classy lady as she was, Martha always cheered for the Louisville Cardinals too—as long as they weren't playing against the Cats.)

Martha was a woman of unshakable faith, and when she was still mobile, nothing could keep her from Saturday evening Mass at Incarnation Catholic Church. (And she always had Werther's candies in her purse to keep any accompanying grandchildren happy and quiet during the service.) In spite of a lifetime filled with struggle, her love for the Lord remained strong, and she

clutched her Rosary in her hands in her final days. Her family misses her so very much but knows that she is at peace, reunited with Donnie and Bobby.

Martha is predeceased by her husband, Donald Wilder; son, Robert Wilder; parents, Peter and Mary Walsh; siblings, Anthony Walsh (Doris), Elizabeth Patterson, Catherine Dunn, Mary Jane Bickett, and James Walsh (Nancy). She is survived by her five daughters, Mary Rymniak, Karen Alpiger (Bud), Deborah Wilder, Paula Schandle (Jim), and Patricia Brooks (James). She is also mourned by her 12 devoted grandchildren; many great-grandchildren; and countless nieces, nephews, cousins, and in-laws. She was truly loved by so many.

Martha leaves her little corner of the world a bit brighter. Hers was a life well lived. May she rest in peace, now that she is finally “home.”

Her funeral Mass will be at 11:00 a.m. Thursday, January 11, 2024, at Incarnation Catholic Church, 2229 Lower Hunters Trace, with burial at Louisville Memorial Gardens West.

Visitation will be from 2:00 – 8:00 p.m. Wednesday at Owen Funeral Home, 5317 Dixie Highway.

In honor of Martha, family and friends are invited to make a donation in her name to Incarnation Catholic Church ([Www.icclou.org](http://www.icclou.org))

Cemetery Details

Louisville Memorial Gardens West

4400 Dixie Hwy
Louisville , KY 40216

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN **10**. 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Owen Funeral Homes - Dixie Highway
5317 Dixie Highway
Louisville, KY 40216
(502) 447-2600
<https://owenfuneralhome.com>

Funeral Mass

JAN **11**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Incarnation Catholic Church
2229 Lower Hunters Trace
Louisville, KY 40216

Tribute Wall



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 10, 2024 at 08:42 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 10, 2024 at 08:38 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 10, 2024 at 08:11 AM



“ *Dear Paula & Family— So very sorry to read of your Mother's passing. What a lovely written tribute of a very special woman. How wonderful to know she is with her handsome husband and dear son! Until you meet again. RIP Hugs & prayers. Kim G*

Kin - January 10, 2024 at 08:01 AM



“ *Rose Garden Heart was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 10, 2024 at 03:04 AM



“ *Love your Trademark Family purchased the Pink Potpourri Bouquet for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



Love your Trademark Family - January 09, 2024 at 12:32 PM



“ *Love your Trademark Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Martha Jean Wilder.*

Love your Trademark Family - January 09, 2024 at 12:32 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 09, 2024 at 09:50 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 09, 2024 at 08:09 AM



“ *Katie, Josh, Ava, and Michael Bird planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Martha Jean Wilder.*

Katie, Josh, Ava, and Michael Bird - January 09, 2024 at 08:09 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Martha Jean Wilder.*

January 09, 2024 at 07:23 AM



“ *Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 09, 2024 at 07:15 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 09, 2024 at 06:21 AM



“ *Anthony Rymniak planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Martha Jean Wilder.*

Anthony Rymniak - January 09, 2024 at 06:21 AM



“ *Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 08, 2024 at 09:28 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.*



January 08, 2024 at 09:28 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Martha Jean Wilder.



January 08, 2024 at 09:18 PM