



Dicus, Mary Nell (Whitten)

February 2, 1935 ~ November 23, 2022
(age 87)

Mary Nell Dicus, beloved mother and grandmother, woman of faith, strict grammarian, and master librarian lived a

full and joyous life. She loved well and baked well and was thus incredibly popular with her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and students. She made the world's best gingersnaps and could balance a spoon on her nose. Her warmth and good nature were joined by a firm commitment to correct grammar and the proper way of doing things. She was thrilled to attend weddings, always arrived thirty minutes early to hear the music and worried weeks ahead of the event over whether the newlyweds would smash cake in each other's faces. But she had a generous heart and quickly overlooked any missteps with the cake.

Mary Nell is survived by a large family who will miss her immensely: daughter Judy, son-in-law Michael, daughter-in-law Rhonda, son Philip and daughter-in-law Judy Eileen, along with grandchildren Summer, John, Aaron, Lauren, Emily, Josie and Ryan, great-grandchildren David, Jacob, Bryan, Rand, Brandy, J.T., Andrew, Isabella, Ian, Layla, Evie, Madelyn and Michael, great-great grandchildren Maria, Lydia, Jacob and Brie, and siblings Wilma, Jean, David and Jack. She will be missed by her nieces, nephews, in-laws and countless friends. She is preceded in death by her husband, Herman, parents, David and Adele, her son David and her great-grandson Caleb.

Mary Nell Whitten, 87, was born on February 2, 1935 on a snowy day in her grandparents' home near Bridgeport, TX. She was the second of five children born to David and Vivian Adele Whitten. She spent her youth in Cisco, TX where she fondly recalled a spare but happy childhood with her siblings as playmates. They had no electricity or indoor plumbing, but the young Whittens were blessed with faithful parents and a home filled with love and good humor. That carefree childhood was marked by the untimely death of David Whitten. Mary Nell was only 12 years old when she lost her father, something she mourned for the rest of her life. Before his death, David obtained a clarinet for young Mary Nell, facilitating her membership in the Cisco band where she was later band president and sweetheart. She was a gifted student who excelled in her studies. Leaving Cisco, Mary Nell moved on to Decatur Baptist College where she was basketball sweetheart, campus favorite and earned an associate's degree in 1954. During her time at DBC, Mary Nell met and married Ansel Fortenberry. They settled in Decatur, TX and went on to have three children of whom Mary Nell was fiercely proud: Judy, David and Philip. Mary Nell cared for her young family while teaching English and earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in education at the University of North Texas. She went on to serve for 36 years as the librarian of Decatur High School, a role which sometimes hampered the antics of her high school aged children but greatly blessed the young people of Decatur, TX. She is remembered as a much-loved faculty member and spoke often and fondly of students and fellow teachers. A lifelong learner and curious woman, she quickly adapted to the computer age and ushered in a wealth of new technology to the Decatur High School library. Mary Nell was "Gran" to 7 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, 4 great-great grandchildren and countless family friends. In 1998, Mary Nell married Herman Dicus. Her grandchildren were old enough to tease her about her dating life at the time. She tried to be stern with them about that behavior, but her good humor mostly got in the way. Mary Nell and Herman enjoyed many happy years together before his death.

