



Ethel Jean Willis Riley

August 25, 1950 - July 5, 2023

Saluda, SC

Ethel Jean Riley

Ethel Jean Willis Riley, 72, went to be with Jesus on Wednesday, July 5, 2023.

Born in Augusta, GA and a daughter of the late Howard Willis and Beatrice Harmon Willis, she was the wife of Dr. Joel Clinton Riley III, mother to five, loving Jeje to ten, and known throughout her community as their own "Mama Jean".

She committed her entire life to children, both her own and those of others, as well as her beloved animal rescues. In her early years as Mom, it was not uncommon to see her taxi-driving her own children and any other person needing a ride to and from events, keeping score books at games for the Saluda Recreation Department, chaperoning field trips, managing dressing rooms at dance recitals, acting as "classroom mom" for school parties, and volunteering as cheer coach and Hollywood PTO director. The doors of her home were always open to any kid who wished to hang out for a while for a game of Handball or flag football. She loved filling the bellies that craved her famous spaghetti, her amazing cube steak with a side of rice and gravy, and her unforgettable red velvet cake. She managed the Saluda Swim Club for several summers and was never short on supplies of "free" popsicles to anyone who forgot their dollar for the day. She filled the gap between being "Mom" to becoming "Jeje" as a teacher at Butler preschool where she loved on students as if they were her own children. When she welcomed her first grandchild in 2003 and the nine more to follow, she quickly found joy in watching children grow all over again. She became a recognized face at baseball fields throughout the state as she followed her grandsons to games all year long and held tightly to her coveted stage-side chair at dance recitals watching her granddaughters grace the spotlights. If her love of all humans was not enough to gain her the best of angel wings, she gained them through the unconditional love she gave to rescued cats and dogs she found abandoned along roadsides.

Surviving are her husband, Dr. Joel Clinton Riley III, three daughters, Heather Shealy (Paul), Heidi Cochran (Jarrett), Holly Shealy (Bubba), all of Saluda, two sons, Clint Riley (Jessica) of Cayce, Clay Riley (Nikki) of Lexington, and ten grandchildren, Connor Shealy, Braydon Shealy, Trisleigh Shealy, Nolan Cochran, Easton Cochran, Cannon Cochran, Brogan Cochran, Hayes Shealy, Ellery Shealy, James Riley.

She is also survived by a sister, Patsy Kirkey, a brother, Tommy Willis (Deb), a sister-in-law, Ann Willis, and several nieces and nephews that she adored.

Mrs. Riley was preceded in death by a loving brother, Howard "Bubber" Willis.

A memorial service will be held at 3 PM Saturday, July 15, 2023 at Emory United Methodist Church with Rev. Trey Shealy and Rev. Ken Freeman officiating. The family will receive friends one hour prior to the service in the church social hall.

Memorials may be made to Savings Saluda Strays (c/o Pet Care of Newberry, 436 Wilson Rd., Newberry, SC 29108).

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 15. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Emory United Methodist Church
423 Emory Road
Saluda, SC 29138

Memorial Service

JUL 15. 3:00 PM (ET)

Emory United Methodist Church
423 Emory Road
Saluda, SC 29138

Tribute Wall



“ *Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.*



July 14, 2023 at 07:14 PM

PC

“ *I have such fond memories of Jean from high school. She was always happy, fun, a sweet soul and a real ball of fire. Jean was a great friend and had a wonderful family. I am so sorry for the loss of your precious loved one, Jean.*
Patty Ann Charles

Patty Ann Charles - July 12, 2023 at 07:53 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.*



July 12, 2023 at 01:48 PM



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

July 12, 2023 at 01:48 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.*



July 12, 2023 at 11:51 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.

July 12, 2023 at 11:51 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.



July 12, 2023 at 09:27 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.



July 11, 2023 at 02:19 PM

PG

“ Jean was a classmate of mine at Aquinas High School and a good friend. I don't know that I have seen her since graduating but still remember her friendliness and big smile and the fun we had together. I will remember your family in my prayers.
Peggy Heffernan Graham

peggy graham - July 11, 2023 at 09:52 AM



“ Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.



July 10, 2023 at 05:27 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.*



July 10, 2023 at 01:38 PM

SH

“ *Sethalene Huff lit a candle in memory of Ethel Riley*



Sethalene Huff - July 10, 2023 at 01:21 PM

RS

“ *she really lived a full life and will leave a lasting legacy take care*

Richard Starling - July 10, 2023 at 10:51 AM

WG

“ *William Naomi Goodman lit a candle in memory of Ethel Riley*



William and Naomi Goodman - July 10, 2023 at 10:02 AM

BG

“ *Brenda Goodman lit a candle in memory of Ethel Riley*



Brenda Goodman - July 10, 2023 at 10:01 AM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Ethel Jean Willis Riley.*



July 10, 2023 at 09:25 AM



“ *Clint, my thoughts and prayers are with you and your family...*



Bill Davis - July 10, 2023 at 09:21 AM



“ *Thinking of you!*

Tammie Covington

Tammie Warren Covington - July 09, 2023 at 08:43 PM