



## Shirley Mae Spears

April 23, 1938 - October 13, 2025

Shirley Mae Spears- Big Stone Gap

Shirley Mae Spears, 87, passed away peacefully on Monday, October 13, 2025, at Lee Health and Rehabilitation Center in Pennington Gap, Virginia.

Born on April 23, 1938, in Wise County, Shirley was the daughter of the late Worley and Mary Phipps. She was one of eleven children. Shirley worked for many years as a cook at Mutual Pharmacy before retiring from Lonesome Pine Hospital. Known for her warm hospitality and unforgettable cooking, she was famous for her Watergate salad, “out of this world” cake, homemade hot dog chili, and comforting chicken and dumplings dishes that brought family and friends together and will be dearly missed at every gathering.

Widowed at a young age, Shirley courageously raised four children on her own. She was strong, independent, kind, and deeply rooted in faith. She listened without judgment, gave advice with grace, and loved unconditionally. A devoted mother, grandmother, sister, friend, aunt, and servant of God, Shirley touched every life she encountered with compassion and quiet strength.

A lifelong member of New Hope Assembly of God, Shirley devoted countless hours to her church family preparing and serving meals in the fellowship hall and sharing in joyful fellowship.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Eckle Spears; nine siblings; and a great-great-grandson, Cole Williams.

Left to cherish her memory are her children, Les Spears (Beth) of Southport, NC, Keeta Dickenson (Roger) of Dryden, VA, Michael Spears (Margie) of Wake Forest, NC, and Connie Ricker (Rick) of Georgetown, TX., her sister, Barbara Boggs of Ewing, VA; seven grandchildren, Jennifer Webb (Arvil) of St. Charles, VA; Rhonda Elkins (Denvy) of London, KY; Yvonne Scoggins of Youngsville, NC; Nikki Spears-D'Innocenzo (Tony) of Youngsville, NC; Jason Spears (Koral) of Bolivia, NC; Emily Dickenson of Dryden, VA; and Michael Spears (Jenny) of New Bern, NC along with fourteen great-grandchildren and twelve great-great-grandchildren.

The family will receive friends on Saturday, October 18, 2025, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at New Hope Assembly of God (1405 First Ave E. Big Stone Gap, VA 24219)

A funeral service will be conducted at 12:00 p.m. with Pastor Rick C. Whitten officiating in the church sanctuary.

Graveside services will be conducted following at Powell Valley Memorial Gardens. ( 5650 Powell Valley Rd. Big Stone Gap, VA)

Family and friends will serve as pallbearers.

To honor her faith and service, the family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions be made toward a scripture plaque to be placed in the church fellowship hall in her memory. Additional funds received will support other church needs in Shirley's name, continuing her legacy of love and service.

Mail memorial contributions to:  
New Hope Assembly of God  
Shirley Spears Memorial Fund  
1405 First Avenue E  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219

An online guest registry is available for the family at [www.holdingfuneralhome.com](http://www.holdingfuneralhome.com)

Holding Funeral Home of Big Stone Gap, is in charge of the Arrangements.

# Cemetery Details

## Powell Valley Memorial Gardens

5650 Powell Valley Road  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219  
(276) 679-0030

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT 18. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

New Hope Assembly of God  
1405 First Ave E.  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219

## Celebration of Life

OCT 18. 12:00 PM (ET)

New Hope Assembly of God  
1405 First Ave E.  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219

## Committal Service

OCT 18. 1:00 PM (ET)

Powell Valley Memorial Gardens  
5650 Powell Valley Road  
Big Stone Gap, VA 24219  
(276) 679-0030



# Tribute Wall

CR

“ I would also like to thank Dalton and the staff at Powell Valley Memorial Gardens for his kindness helping my husband and I with designing Mom's tombstone for her final resting place and the care they will give her. Also, again thank you to Holding Funeral Home. Connie and Ric Ricker



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**Connie Ricker** - December 31, 2025 at 09:07 AM

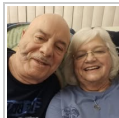
CR

“ My Mom passed away soon after my husband and I left to return home to Texas after visiting the hospital to help care and love on her with hugs and kisses in her last days, though I did not know it would be 4 days later or I would have stayed. It's not typical for children to post, but I've never been "typical" so I would like to share my memories of Mom since I was unable to return for her funeral. First I would like to thank my niece Emily and her Aid Mykala for giving her such kind, loving care in her final days and my cousins Jackie and Frankie for their love, help and companionship over the years. She also had several neighbors, Kay Lewis and the Shupes and the Lovell family members (Leisa, Janet, Kathy, Teresa, Diane, Keith, Henry, Louise and Tim, Aunt Janette and Uncle Dallas and Uncle Glen that looked out for her over the years and too many others to name). She was very proud of her hugh family and loved to brag about all the children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great, great, great grandchildren children, nieces and nephews. She loved receiving pictures and proudly displaying them. Thank you Jennifer, Rhonda, Emily, Nikki, Yvonne, Michael, Jason, Ethan, Clayton, Tori, Matt, Kara, Taylor, Lexus and Taylor for letting her be Mamaw and spoil you and your kids and spouses. She loved spoiling all of us. My Mom was always worried about others when they suffered and what can we do to help them and she was a humanitarian and my inspiration to become one at an early age and now a lifelong calling. Her love of God inspired me to also be a believer. We spent a lot of my youth at church and I have a lot of good memories of those times together, especially Durhams Chapel in Crackers Neck. Thanks to New Hope Assembly of God for the love you showed my Mom over the years and her friends there. Thanks to my Mom's personal friends for the love you showed her over the years (Barbara, Linda and Danny). Mom loved to cook and was always cooking up something wonderful and when we visited her she would make our favorites like her biscuits and gravy, mac and cheese, chicken salad, beans and cornbread, lasagna, spaghetti, chicken and dumplings and too many to name. She was the hardest worker



*I knew and kept an immaculate home and yard with her kids help and loved to host parties and holidays and feed anyone who visited our home. My favorite was her famous turkey and dressing, homemade rolls, potatoes, desserts, just too many dishes to name. She is why I love to cook and we spent a lot of phone time talking about recipes. When she cooked for Mutual Pharmacy a line would be out the door around the building to get her food. She also cooked for her church and served God's house for many, many years along side her sister Helen, also her best friend. I ate a lot of good food from their homes and a lot of memories. My Mom would visit us in NC and Texas and we spoiled her and showed her the towns and cities. She loved the museums, parks, music, plays, shopping, movies, beaches and of course food, nothing too spicy she would say. My favorite was cooking with her. She was also Mom to my husband and many more people because she was a listener when you had a problem and needed a friend. She was a giver and taught me to be one. Though I asked for nothing the greatest gift she gave me was our worn out family Bible that I treasure. I would also like to thank the staff at Holden Funeral Home, Norton Community Hospital, Lee Rehabilitation Center, PACE, MEOC for their kindness and care. Moms in God's loving arms now and having a big celebration reuniting with her family and loved ones. I bet her and Aunt Helen do the cooking. We will forevermore love and miss you Mom!  
Connie and Ric ❤️*

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**Connie Spears Ricker** - October 28, 2025 at 06:13 PM



*Connie, I'm so sorry to hear about your sweet Mother passing away! I didn't know anything until I saw your cousin Janet today! Praying for you and your family! Love you!*

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**Allen-Cindy Clark** - December 05, 2025 at 10:49 PM

CR

*Aw thank you Cindy. You are so kind. I miss her so much. Love you too!*

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**Connie Ricker** - December 07, 2025 at 04:25 PM

JS

*I don't have a whole Lotta good to say that was my mother and father that you're talking about. Nobody had to courtesy to call me up message me or anything else about the services or anything to do with their funeral. I am their only son my name is John Harlin Spears I am the only son that my mother and father had and when people ask me about my family I just tell them I have no idea where they are or who they are because my family as far as I'm concerned is a big zero. Nobody had a courtesy that notify me of my death of my mother or my father or were they ceremonies were going to be or when he proud of yourself. I hope whoever you leave behind you when you die as a little more courtesy for their friends and family than you have shown me.. Connie I guess you and some of the other people in the family right more than myself and my wife. Nobody had a courtesy to tell me that they died not my wife. She died later, but that my mother and father both passed away when people ask me where is my family? I have to say I have no idea. I'm 81 years old now and I haven't heard from one of you people. I have two children that called me, daddy, a young man and a young lady. When people ask me one of my family is, I gotta tell the truth." I have no idea I'm 81 years old now, and not one of you ever reached out to me once. So I guess my answer is a truthful answer. I said I don't have a family when they ask about it.*

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**John Harlin Spears** - May 18 at 01:40 PM

JS

*As I said, if you have nothing good to say, don't say anything*

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**John Harlin Spears** - May 18 at 01:53 PM

JS

*Yes, being I really don't have a family, but I have a lot of loyal friends and there's gonna take care of me once I take a bath*

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**John Harlin Spears** - May 18 at 02:07 PM

JS

*That was supposed to say the last sentence... friends and they're gonna take care of me once I take a dirt path. You know now that I see what you people are. I'm glad I never came across you cause not one of you sound like somebody I'd like to have spent any time with self-centered you lack courtesy and you talk your talk, but you don't walk to walk.*

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**John Harlin Spears** - May 18 at 02:09 PM

PS

“ Shirley was my mom’s sister -in-law and one of my favorite aunts. We visited so often on weekends to see her, my uncle Eckle and mamaw Spears Marketta was my special little cousin, whom I adored once she came along. Shirley was such a gracious lady. So very reserved and quiet but such a loving woman. We loved her cooking and stopped by frequently to get a piece of her pie. My mom adored Shirley and so did I. We will forever miss you!!!

Patrici/Trish Reed Scalf - October 16, 2025 at 04:52 AM

SF

“ Sincerest sympathy.  
Shirley M. Fisher



Shirley M. Fisher - October 14, 2025 at 07:18 PM

MG

“ Shirley was a dearly loved Aunt and great-Aunt. She was a special part of my Mother’s (Leisa) life, as well as mine. She was a supportive and loving sister to my grandmother, Helen, and we shared many laughs and good times together when she would come to help my Mother care for my grandmother. Her biscuits and gravy were second to none - I craved them during all three of my pregnancies and Shirley was so sweet, ensuring that she made them for me in the mornings when I would be at my grandmother’s house. Her “Broken Glass” Jello desert is a cherished part of my own recipe collection - so many times she made a pan for my family and I just because she knew how much I liked it.

Thank you for your love and for feeding us well, Shirley! You won’t be forgotten.

Megan Gilley - October 14, 2025 at 08:53 AM

KR

*Shirley was a precious lady who I worked with @ Mutual while in High School ! I will cherish my great memories of her & all the great recipes & food memories ! Prayers for the Family*

**Kathy Christian Rhoten** - October 14, 2025 at 06:50 PM

CR

*Megan you are so sweet. Thanks for your kind words.*

**Connie Spears Ricker** - October 28, 2025 at 06:21 PM

TN

*“ Shirley was truly one of a kind. A sweet lady and wonderful human being. My sincerest condolences. Teresa Branham Newspme*

**Teresa Newsome** - October 13, 2025 at 11:37 PM