



Claborn, Venita Merle (King)

1929-2025

[By Messenger Staff](#)

on November 04, 2025

Venita Merle Claborn, 95, of Decatur, entered into the presence of her Savior on Oct. 28, 2025, surrounded by her daughters, granddaughter, and grandson.

Born on Dec. 22, 1929, in Rush Creek, to Julius and Addie King, Merle was the beloved big sister to her brother Glenn. She spent her childhood in the New Harp community, where her days were filled with the simple joys of country life – playing with cousins, and spending countless hours at her grandparents' house just down the road. She loved baking lemon and fried pies to sell at her family's grocery store, a sweet early sign of the love and care she would pour into everything she did. These early years nurtured her lifelong devotion to family, hospitality, and

togetherness.

On Nov. 5, 1949, she married Kenneth Claborn in Electra. Together, they built a life on a farm in Alvord, raising their daughters Jenny and Janet, and later settling in Decatur. Merle was a devoted homemaker and a tireless helper on the family farm, tending gardens and cattle with care. Her home was a haven, always warm, always welcoming, and always filled with the aroma of freshly baked cookies.

Merle's servant heart was the cornerstone of her life. She lovingly cared for her own mother and mother-in-law with grace and patience, embodying the biblical call to honor and serve. Her grandchildren were the joy of her heart, and she poured herself into their lives, teaching, playing, baking, and praying. Her sweet countenance and quiet strength left a lasting imprint on all who knew her.

A faithful member of First Baptist Church of Decatur for 47 years, Merle lived out her faith through action. After retirement, she and Kenneth traveled the country in their RV, visiting national parks and serving with the Texas Baptist Men, offering disaster relief and gospel-centered outreach efforts wherever they served. She loved embroidery, puzzles, bluegrass gospel music, and old Westerns—especially *Gunsmoke*. Her grandchildren fondly recall summers filled with fishing trips, vacation Bible school, paper dolls, and laughter echoing through the house. She was the embodiment of love and devotion, always a consummate mother, grandmother, aunt, wife, and friend.

Merle is survived by her daughter Jenny and son-in-law, Lawrence (Pat); grandson, Kenneth (Mark); great-granddaughter Courtney and husband, Josh; and great-great-grandchildren Poppy and Clark; grandson Matthew (Matt) and wife, Jessica; and great-grandchildren Caleb and Eliana (Ellie); daughter Janet; granddaughter Venita (Michelle) and husband, Bobby; and great-grandchildren Addie and Cora; brother Glenn King; and a host of nieces and nephews who loved their Aunt Merle.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Kenneth; her parents, Julius and Addie King; and her son-in-law, Randell Johnson.

Her legacy of love, service, and sweetness will live on in the hearts of all who were blessed to know her. Family and friends were invited to celebrate Merle's life at a funeral service held on Nov. 1, at 1 p.m. at Hawkins Funeral Home in Decatur. Visitation began at 12 p.m., followed by burial at Oaklawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Texans on Mission (formerly Texas Baptist Men) or First Baptist Decatur.