



Ernestine Smith Gibbs

October 17, 1925 - January 5, 2017

Ernestine Smith Gibbs passed away on Thursday, January 5th at the age of 91. She was the youngest of the four children born to Ernest Lafayette and Harriet Lindsay Smith, who along with her three brothers, Harold, Earl and James Louie are deceased. Her loving husband of 63 years, the Reverend James Samuel Gibbs Jr., passed away in 2011 at the age of 86. She is survived by her three children, James Samuel Gibbs III, Bradley Ernest Gibbs and Lindsay Gibbs Bondurant and five grandchildren; Alex Bondurant, Grace Bondurant, Jamie Gibbs, Caitlin Gibbs and Bradley Bondurant. Ernestine was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina on October 17th, 1925. Her father and mother each had assumed responsibility for raising their younger brothers and sisters after the early deaths of their parents, so in addition to her three brothers, the family included these cousins, an additional five, who brought the total number of children in the household to nine when Ernestine was born. Her father Ernest was a cotton mill supervisor and her mother, "Hattie", in addition to raising the family worked in the mills as well to help make enough money to feed their large and growing family. With parents working outside the home, the children had to assume many of the household tasks and helped to raise the younger ones. The devotion of this tight knit family to each other was a constant force that ingrained in Ernestine an unbending strength of character and sense of responsibility for those whom she loved. Though neither her father nor her mother had gone beyond the fifth grade in public school, her parents were intelligent people who understood the value of

education and ensured that each of their children were afforded the benefits of a college education. The Smith family placed a high value on music and literature as well. The children were raised to be avid readers who formed their own strong opinions about life, responsibility to God and Country and the value of a strong family. From this firm foundation, the family ethos of support and love for each other, value of work and education formed a quiet strength that was ever present in the way Ernestine led her life and raised her family. The Smith family were members of the Methodist Church which they attended throughout Ernestine's youth. Two of Ernestine's brothers, Earl and Louie fought in World War II. Louie, the next youngest after Ernestine, was killed in action in Germany just before the end of the war in April of 1945. This traumatic loss of her brother was a point of sadness for her for many years. But out of sadness and sorrow, happy times are often born. Later that year, while living in Spindale, North Carolina and attending the Spindale Methodist Church she met her future husband, James Gibbs, Jr. who was the son of the minister there and had just returned from the war and service with the Army Air Corps in the South Pacific Theatre. After graduating from Spindale High School in Spindale, North Carolina in 1943, Ernestine enrolled in Limestone College in Gaffney, South Carolina and undertook studies to become a teacher. In 1947 she finished her studies and graduated from Women's College in Greensboro, North Carolina where she was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society there. Her courtship with James spanned the year's immediately after the war and while she was finishing college. They were married June 12th, 1948. James referred to himself after meeting Ernestine as the "luckiest man alive" and to Ernestine as "the most beautiful woman in the world". They moved to Spartanburg where James attended Wofford College while Ernestine worked and helped to support the couple as she had completed her studies and graduated the year before. While she had early plans to perhaps obtain an engineering degree and work as an aircraft designer, her life with James and their plans for a family now became the focus of her life. James and Ernestine began a family with the birth of Jimmy

and Brad in 1951 and 1953 while James was studying at Duke Seminary for the ministry. Lindsay was born in 1958 while the family was living in Greensboro and James was the pastor at Moriah Methodist Church. Ernestine was a devoted wife and mother to three children and during their early years spent her time raising them and ingraining the strong family values that she shared with James. She was also a constant, loving partner for James, not just in raising the family but also providing unselfishly, the support required of the wife of a Methodist minister. A tireless member of Sunday school classes, preparer of dishes for church sponsored dinners and for the later part of her life, always a member of the church choir, she joined her husband James in a life of service for the church and the community that it served. Ernestine also found time to practice and play the piano. The Gibbs home was often filled with sound of music from the piano played by her and the beautiful tenor voice of James, her husband. Her favorite habit though was her reading. The book shelves were always full of books that had actually been read, often multiple times. Trips to the public library were a necessity during the summers between school years for the Gibbs children and Ernestine ensured that the young minds were always challenged and kept sharp. When the children were all of school age, she began to teach again to help pay for the coming cost of college for her children. Students and other teachers with whom she worked always spoke of her as one of the best teachers at their school. After their children were grown and married Ernestine and James retired to Davidson, NC and later to Park Pointe Village retirement community in Rock Hill, SC. Ernestine Smith Gibbs was one of the strongest, and most positive influences in the lives of her children and grandchildren. The safe haven of the home that she provided through her quiet presence and strength, along with the ever present example of selfless support and love for her family allowed for growth into adulthood while being supported with firm direction. We wish this short remembrance of Ernestine's life to be a reminder of the impact and influence of her life on those of her family who cherish her memory and will miss and

love her always. A Memorial service will be held at 2:00 PM on Wednesday, January 11 at Central United Methodist Church, Mooresville, NC, with Rev. Randy Sherrill officiating. The family will receive friends prior to the service from 1:00-2:00 PM at the church. Cavin-Cook Funeral Home, Mooresville, NC, is serving the Gibbs family. Condolences may be made to the family at www.cavin-cook.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Ernestine Smith Gibbs*

February 14, 2021 at 11:24 AM



“ *Ernestine Smith Gibbs*

February 14, 2021 at 11:04 AM



“ *Ernestine Smith Gibbs*

February 14, 2021 at 11:03 AM



“ *Ernestine enjoyed a good long life. So many cannot say the same.
She was especially strong. Ps. 90:10*

January 12, 2017 at 12:00 AM