



## Lessie Ree Kirch

January 23, 1929 - December 28, 2024

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It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Lessie Ree Kirch, a beloved mother, a grandmother and friend who was lifted from this life into eternal glory with our Lord on December 28, 2024, a month before her 96th birthday. Lessie's warmth, kindness and vibrant spirit left an indelible mark on all who knew her.

Born in Gholson, TX, a suburb of Waco, to Bessie Pearl Walsh and Leonard Clyde Clements, Lessie was the youngest of five children. She had two sisters and two brothers and grew up farming in the country until the family moved into Waco. After graduating from Waco High School, Lessie studied to become a Lab Technician and began her career at the Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center. Then in 1951, while drawing blood from donors in the lab where she worked, she met her husband, Ernie Kirch, a tall and handsome Air Force Sergeant stationed at nearby James Connally AFB. Ernie knew he'd met the love of his life and Lessie and Ernie were soon married and began the wonderful journey together that brought them their family. During their tour that included Arizona, California, Hawaii, Georgia, and Virginia, and while also enduring the loss of an infant son, Stephen, Lessie was blessed with four children: Kathy, Janet, Teresa, and Ernie Jr. During that period of starting and

stopping, of packing and unpacking, Lessie did her part to support her family as best she could, in the ways she knew how, loving and working hard for them just as her mother had done for her.

After their final military move to Alexandria, Virginia in 1964, Lessie was able to focus less on moving and more on her family, her faith, and her friends. During the 20 years that followed, she was very active at the family's church, Bethany Lutheran, while she maintained a part-time career in hospital admissions, an optometrist's technical assistant and she shared childcare duties with other mothers she knew who also had young children. Ernie Sr retired from the USAF in 1967 and after a second government career in the Secret Service, he totally retired in 1984. He and Lessie soon moved to South Carolina. Sadly, it was there in Anderson, SC, that Lessie lost "Big Ern" at the young age of 58, just a few days after Thanksgiving in 1986.

Throughout their many moves, Lessie and Ernie always centered their family around their faith, and around their local Lutheran church. Lessie was very active in the Ladies Guild and in youth activities and that work carried her through the years after she lost her husband. Following his death, she remained active at her church, Abiding Savior, and also in community affairs in Anderson; Meals on Wheels, Hospice and free clinics for medical and dental needs. She worked for eighteen years with Hospice of the Upstate sitting with many patients at the Hospice House of Anderson. Lessie even organized and conducted various fundraising events for Hospice, Meals on Wheels and the Home for Unwed Mothers. These included several very successful and well attended golf tournaments. She soon became friends with many local merchants as she was instrumental in coercing them to donate what they could to support a good cause. As many have learned over the years, it was hard to tell Lessie "no."

In 2004, Lessie moved from Anderson to Englewood, Florida, where she

continued to organize and urge people to participate in local efforts that supported the elderly residents living in that Gulf coast community. At her church, she cheerfully engaged those needing medical advice or help with their medications, and to keep spirits high she introduced a "game day" for seniors, often providing participants with a homemade lunch she made herself. She also became a volunteer for Tidewell Hospice of Southwest Florida. Her last move to North Carolina was in the Spring of 2017, and there, in Davidson, Lessie once again began caring for others and putting her organizing skills to work. She brought the existing raised garden beds to life and she encouraged residents at Williams Place, her Independent Living facility, to plant vegetables and flowers! She then faithfully watered and weeded the gardens daily to keep them healthy and thriving. Lessie also promoted and organized a corn hole team made up of fellow residents who competed against local policemen, firemen and church groups. She was formally named an Ambassador in her community, with the job of welcoming new residents and helping them adjust to independent senior living.

Lessie lived every day of her life to its fullest, and she lovingly urged her family, her friends, and others around her to do the same. She was strong and intelligent, skilled and talented, she was silly and loved to laugh. Lessie wanted the best for you, and she would eagerly give you all she had to give and then give some more. God, thank you for the blessing of your faithful servant, Lessie.

Lessie is survived by her four children: Kathy Kirch (Glenda McDorman) of Mooresville, NC, Janet St. John of Deer Creek, CO, Teresa Carson (Corky) of Cornelius, NC, and Ernie Kirch Jr (Lisa) of Falls Church, VA. Four grandchildren: Allison Gallagher (Billy) of Alexandria, VA, Alexis St. John (Josh Rysavy) of Greely, CO, Martin St. John (Ashlynn) of Englewood, CO and Stephen Gedney of Mooresville, NC. And one great grandchild: Walker

St. John of Englewood, CO. Lessie also wanted to honor two special people in her life who were like daughters to her: Becky Whitmire of Greenville, SC and her Japanese daughter, Masami Fujinami Caherec of Port Louis, France.

Interment will be in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA, with her husband at a later date. [this obituary was lovingly written by Ernie Kirch Jr]

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to VIA Hospice in remembrance of Lessie at this link: <https://www.viagiving.org/honor-someone-special> or by phone 704-335-3557

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home & Crematory, Mooresville, is serving the Kirch family. Condolences may be made to the family at [www.cavin-cook.com](http://www.cavin-cook.com).

# Cemetery Details

**Arlington National Cemetery**

# Tribute Wall

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“ *I am so sorry for your families loss. Lessie was my mom's first friend at Williams Place and dining partner. Lessie was caring, smart, funny, always well dressed - a real leader to all who knew her there. My sister and I have many fond memories of Lessie. Prayers & Love*  
*(My mom was Janet Fuhrman)*

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**Cathy Schrader** - January 13, 2025 at 05:14 PM