



Marlene S Zollicoffer

July 1, 1939 - July 11, 2025

Marlene Smith entered this world on a warm summer day, July 1, 1939, in the heart of Bladen County, North Carolina. She was raised by her mother, Lula Mae Lewis, her stepfather, Rogers Lewis and her grandmother, Mary Francis Smith, on 100 acres of family-owned farmland—a remarkable achievement for any African American family of that time. Lovingly known as "Skeeter"; she had fire in her veins and a quick temper that could flare up whenever she felt wronged. But when God saved her at 15, He gently sanded the sharp edges of her temper into patience, sass, and a razor-sharp wit.

After high school, she left the country roads of North Carolina for Baltimore, Maryland to obtain a stenographer's certificate. There, she met McCray Zollicoffer, the love of her life. Married on October 2, 1959, they spent over 60 years filling their home with children and family, friends and strangers, and faith, love, and laughter.

Before settling in Baltimore to raise a family, she, Mack and her sister-in-law, Molly, lived in Boston for a few years. Marlene described her time in Boston as one of the best times of her life. The stories from those days were as rich as her macaroni and cheese—a dish so heavenly it could make angels drop their harps for just a spoonful. However, Marlene wasn't always the "top chef" we came to know and love. We still laugh at the story of when she caught Mack sneaking sugar into her less-than-perfect sweet potato pie. But over time, with

practice and love, that pie became one of her signature dishes. From her mac and cheese to fried corn, melt-in-your-mouth beef, homemade cakes, creamy grits, her great-grandson's favorite fried apples, and her oldest son's beloved deviled eggs, Marlene's culinary skills were legendary. On Sundays, her home overflowed with people from all walks of life, and she fed them all—her kindness, like her pots, never ran dry. With unmatched genius, she could transform the contents of any fridge into a feast-worthy meal. She simply had that kind of magic.

Back in Baltimore, Marlene's determination was evident as she rose to supervisor of records management at Blue Cross and Blue Shield. She retired from Blue Cross at 57 and went back to school, earning a bachelor's degree in Management Science from Coppin State University. Throughout her life, she excelled professionally in many leadership roles. She also directed a number of church choirs and singing groups and devoted time to a variety of church ministries. She fed the unsheltered and became the go-to babysitter for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Even into her 80s, she served as the office manager for her son's plumbing business. Marlene gave her all—to her work, her family, her faith, and her community leaving a legacy that shines brightly in every life she touched.

Marlene was not just a mother—she was a beacon of unwavering support. She was there. Always. At every game, every recital, every wobbly performance where her children took the stage. If her presence was currency, her children lived in untold riches. She clapped the loudest, cheered the hardest, and believed in them deeply. She was their constant, their most loyal fan. Take, for instance, the great piano debacle: while Marlene was a gifted pianist, her youngest daughter, bless her heart, was not. The piano teacher—a kind and patient man—one day met Marlene at his front door and confessed: "Mrs. Zollicoffer", I simply cannot keep accepting your money. Your daughter... well... piano may not be her ministry." But here's the thing Marlene

hadn't noticed. Not even a hint of doubt had crossed her mind. Because that was who she was: a mother who cheered her children on, all by herself, if necessary. It mattered not if everyone else left the stands or that the piano keys moaned under the weight of misplaced fingers, she never wavered. Her loyalty was beautifully fierce. But let it also be known, Marlene was no passive mother. If discipline was needed, she delivered. Like the time she descended from the choir stand, corrected her unruly sons with the precision of a field general, returned them to their seats, and was back in the choir stand before the next stanza began. Later in life, she humorously reassigned her children new titles— Greg became "the father", Paula "the mother", Reggie, "the husband" and Mary, of course, "the good child".

Faith in God was the cornerstone of Marlene's life. Her quiet, heartfelt prayers were the constant conversations that she shared with her Savior. At any given moment, you might walk in and find her having just a little talk with Jesus. And her voice— a songbird's melody-soared highest when she sang Precious Lord, Take my hand. As a founding member of St. Timothy's Christian Baptist Church, she poured her heart, her gifts, and her talents into her church. Throughout her life, people gravitated toward her. All drawn to the light she effortlessly radiated. She led with humility, grace, and humor that could catch you off guard. And that humor, much like her, remained as sharp and refreshing as a cold glass of lemonade on a blistering summer day.

Fiercely independent, Marlene never wanted to be a burden to anyone. Even to her final days, we tried to convince her that giving back to her was our greatest honor as she was simply reaping what she'd so selflessly sown into all of us over these many years.

So lived Marlene Smith Zollicoffer—a daughter of North Carolina soil, a devoted wife, a loving matriarch, a trusted friend, a natural leader, and, above all, a

woman of unshakable faith. She shared her heart through her food, her songs, her humor and her countless acts of kindness, leaving a legacy of love, laughter and faith that will endure for generations. Now, she rests in the arms of her Lord, reunited with our dad— her partner in life and in eternity.

Marlene leaves to mourn her four children: Mary Powell (Derrick), Gregory Zollicoffer (Wendy), Reginald Zollicoffer (Michelle), and Paulette Moody (Bruce); her nineteen grandchildren: Angel, Jerhi, Derrick, Andrea, James, Tiarra, Terrell, Michael, Darryl, Ashley, Marissa, Bianca, Kia, Drew, Marissa, Maya, Jordan, Kelly, and Kinady; and her twenty-eight great-grandchildren. She is also survived by four sisters-in-law: Gloria, Evelyn, Molly, and Chaney; one brother-in-law, Nathaniel; a special friend, Dr. Minnie Washington (Minnie Pearl); and two special nieces, Verna and Thelma. Her siblings Pollie Mae Smith, Helen James, and Jeremiah Jefferson preceded her in death. Marlene also leaves behind a host of nieces, nephews, family, friends, neighbors, and the congregation of St. Timothy's.

Previous Events

Public Viewing

JUL 25. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Home - West
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215

Wake

JUL 26. 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

St Timothy Baptist Church
4005 Groveland Ave
Baltimore, MD

Funeral Service

JUL 26. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Timothys Christian Baptist Church
4005 Groveland Ave
Baltimore, MD

Tribute Wall

MA

“ *Marlene was my manager at UMBaltimore. She was the kindest, sweetest woman I've ever known. I was thinking about her recently when I found her obituary. She shared her sweet potato pie and coconut cake recipes with me. I'll never forget her. Rest in Peace, Marlene.* ”



Mary - June 12 at 10:01 AM

IS

“ *I will always remember Marlene as a kind, loving Christian. She would always greet me with a loving spirit.* ”

Irene Saunders - July 26, 2025 at 12:42 PM

PA

“ *4 files added to the album mom with family and friends* ”



paulette - July 20, 2025 at 10:41 PM



“ Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Marlene S Zollicoffer.



July 17, 2025 at 01:45 PM



“ From Programs Treatment & Reentry Staff purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Marlene S Zollicoffer.



From Programs Treatment & Reentry Staff - July 16, 2025 at 01:29 PM



“ From Programs Treatment & Reentry Staff planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Marlene S Zollicoffer.

From Programs Treatment & Reentry Staff - July 16, 2025 at 01:29 PM

TR

“ My many favorite memories of my godmother, Aunt Marlene, will always be getting to see her every Sunday morning when I was a little girl and Thursday evenings during choir rehearsal. Hearing her sing with the choir during worship services. It was always a treat to hear her sing, *When the Morning Comes (By and By)*. As well as spending some of my Friday evenings with her while my father practiced with *The Baltimore Christianaires* in the basement of her home.

I thank GOD for allowing me to have such a sweet soul in my life. And I'd like to thank the family for sharing her with me. You all are in my thoughts and prayers. Aunt Marlene will always remain in my heart. God bless and I love you all.

Talia (Tia) Richardson

Talia Richardson - July 14, 2025 at 06:42 PM

BA

Condolences to Marlene family sorry to hear of her passing a wonderful friendly, kind, and lovely, we were co-worker's in department of Physician billing UMMC. Giving praise & honor to GOD allowing me know Marlene was a wonderful person. Family be strong her memories will always be with you, you're not alone. sending heart warming love. 🙏
Barbara Austin.

Barbara Austin - July 16, 2025 at 08:57 PM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Funeral Homes - July 14, 2025 at 02:37 PM