



Mary Jean Davis Gardner

January 31, 1944 - May 26, 2025

Mary Jean Davis Gardner was born on January 31, 1944, in Shreveport, Louisiana, to Ida Bell and Cartes Davis. She spent part of her early childhood in Homer, Louisiana, before her family made a new home in Vallejo, California, in 1948 - a place that would hold a special place in their heart for the rest of their lives.

Mary was raised in the Methodist church, where she first developed her strong foundation of faith. After moving to Vallejo, she was baptized at St. John Baptist Church. In later years, she became a devoted member of St. Paul AME Church, where she continued to grow in her spiritual walk and serve her community. Mary's faith was a guiding light throughout her life, giving her strength and hope in every season.

Mary Jean's lifelong journey in education began in her early school years, accompanying her eldest sister to class, sparking a love for learning that carried her through to her graduation from Vallejo High School on June 4, 1962 - a proud milestone for her and her family.

Mary Jean's strong work ethic and compassionate spirit were evident throughout her career. Her first job was at Cedars Life, where she cared deeply for the well-being of others. She then made history at Mare Island Naval Shipyard, becoming one of the first Black women to work as a boat rigger - a role she took great pride in. Later, Mary entered the world of marketing, working at One Stop Shop Advertising in Oakland, California, co-owning the business with her partner, Robert Rollerson. After the business

closed, she brought her warmth and welcoming nature to Global Realty in Vallejo, where she worked the front desk. Following the birth of her beloved grandson Emondre, Mary embraced a new chapter by opening her own childcare center, Mary's Family Daycare, where she poured her heart into nurturing children in her community.

Mary's greatest joy came from her role as a mother. In December 1970, she and her significant other Boney Lee Ward welcomed their daughter, LaShanda, into the world. A few years later, she married Dennis Gardner, Sr. in the fall of 1972, and together they built a loving home and welcomed their son, Dennis II, in October 1973. After the passing of her husband Dennis, Mary spent several years as a widow. After the loss of her husband, Mary opened her heart and home with love when God gifted her with daughters, Jamie "Poppy" and Nakiyah, to nurture and guide them with the same love and devotion. In 2004, she found companionship again and married Wilford Terrell. Though their paths eventually went separate ways, Mary carried the lessons and memories from each chapter of her life with grace and strength. Mary was a proud and devoted grandmother to seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, all of whom brought immense joy to her life. Her love for her family was deep and unconditional, and she cherished every moment spent with them.

Mary Jean embodied the words of Proverbs 31:25: "She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come." Her resilience and grace were a testament to her unwavering spirit. She will be lovingly remembered for her strength, deep love for her family, and wholehearted dedication to those she cared for. Mary had a passion for cooking, loved entertaining and hosting joyful gatherings, and treasured spending quality time with her loved ones. She also left behind a legacy of wisdom, generously sharing her knowledge and life lessons with all who knew her.

In the days leading up to her passing, Mary faced serious health challenges and was sent home to be with her family. Against all expectations, she showed remarkable strength - regaining her ability to walk and spending

precious time with her loved ones before peacefully passing away Monday, May 26, 2025 (Memorial Day) surrounded by loved ones. Her journey reminds us of Matthew 9:22: "Jesus turned and saw her. "Have courage, daughter," he said. "Your faith has healed you." And the woman was made well from that moment."

Her faith brought peace to her and all who loved her. Mary truly lived the words of 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Mary Jean was welcomed into heaven by her parents, Cartes and Ida Bell Davis; her sister, Wanda Burson; her brother, Bobby Adams; her uncle, Paul Givens; her grandsons, Demazhe' and Desoni Gardner; and her nephews, George Taylor and Demetrius and Damien Davis.

Mary's legacy of love, strength, and faith will live on in all who knew her. She leaves behind a treasured heritage, survived by her closely-knit siblings, brothers - Carl Lee and Micheal Davis and Rev. Marvin Adams; and sisters - Joanne Taylor, Gertrude Roberts, Ruby Davis, Betty Ann Joseph, Shirley Marie (Eric Rocker), Patricia (Louis Vondo), Patsy Holland, Deirdre Dotson, Vivian Lewis, and Jeanetta Davis; devoted children LaShanda and her spouse Trimaine, Dennis II, Jamie, and Nakiyah; grandchildren, Dennise and her spouse Arnold, Dennis III, Emondre, Desonte', Eimaj, Anthony "Noodles", and Bruce "BJ"; and her beloved great-grandchildren, Kai, Jayden, Josiah, Adeya, and Devyn; and a loving bunch of cousins, nieces, and nephews; not to mention the friends and community members that became family.

Acknowledgements

The family of Mary Jean Davis Gardner extends our deepest gratitude to each and every one of you who offered your love and support during this time of loss. Whether you sent flowers, cards, heartfelt messages on social media, offered prayers, spoke kind words, or showed compassion through any act of sympathy or kindness - we are truly grateful. If, during this time of grief, we

have unintentionally overlooked anyone, we kindly ask for your forgiveness. Please know that every expression of love has brought us comfort. From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you. May God bless you all.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, June 18 from 4-8 PM with a quiet hour to be held at 6 PM at Twin Chapels Mortuary, 1100 Tennessee St., Vallejo. Funeral Services will be held Thursday, June 19 at 11 AM at Friendship Baptist Church, 1905 Florida St., Vallejo. Burial will immediately follow in Sunrise Memorial Cemetery, 2201 Sacramento St., Vallejo.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN **18**. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM.

Twin Chapels Mortuary

Funeral Service

JUN **19**. 11:00 AM (PT)

Friendship Baptist Church
1905 Florida Street
Vallejo, CA 94590

Tribute Wall



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mary Jean Davis Gardner.*



June 18, 2025 at 07:00 PM



“ *Sista Cal lit a candle in memory of Mary Jean Davis Gardner*



Sista Cal - June 18, 2025 at 12:38 AM



“ *To the family of my friend Mary Jean. Mary Jean was like a big sister, always had great advice. Very kind person and a community supporter. Mary Jean helped the Floydterrace Reunion committee with the after party on many occasions. Which allowed us to raise funds for future Floydterrace Reunion. I got to speak to Mary Jean before she transitioned. I was great full for. Mary Jean will be missed. Stay Strong, and God Bless.*



Norman (Puncho)McLeod - June 16, 2025 at 08:25 PM

BR

The Calhoun's wish to express our deepest condolences to the family of Mary Jean. 💕 You became part of our family and the time we spent together at Global Real Estate is priceless! You did so much for the company and we often told you how appreciative and what a pleasure it was to have you there.. We love you as a big sister and will miss you.. Take your rest! 🙏💕🙏

Betty, Harold, Brenda & Reco - June 18, 2025 at 12:37 AM