



Nita Jean Thornton

November 29, 1928 - October 1, 2025

Nita Jean (Watkins) Thornton was born at her family home on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 29, 1928, to Lee and Lucille Watkins in Winnsboro, TX.

Nita passed away at her home in Wenatchee, WA, on Oct. 1, 2025, at age 96 after a fulfilling and productive life.

She grew up on a large farm in East Texas, often riding her horse to help her dad round up cattle. Her mother taught her how to make homemade biscuits and gravy, sew, and play piano before the untimely death of her mom when Nita was 15. Nita loved attending school and became a lifetime learner. She graduated as one of the valedictorians of Winnsboro High School class of 1946, and graduated from North Texas State Teachers College (now named Univ. of North Texas) in 1949, followed by earning a masters' degree in Business Education.

While in college she met the love of her life, James Richard (Dick) Thornton, a college student on the GI Bill after serving in the Navy during WWII in the South Pacific.

Dick and Nita married on August 12, 1949, at First Baptist Church in Winnsboro, and they were married for 59 years until his death in 2009. The summer after they married, they signed up for a college geology class which included a month-long bus trip through western states, whereupon they yearned to some day live in the beautiful Northwest. That memorable bus trip meandered through Wenatchee, WA, where Nita would proudly call home for

the last 14 years of her life. The newlyweds became high school teachers for the first two years of their marriage. Then Dick felt called to ministry work, and attended Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Ft. Worth for two years, while Nita taught school and worked summer office jobs to pay the bills during those lean years. In 1962 they accepted an offer from The Southern Baptist Assoc. to move to Vancouver, WA, to lead a new church start. Nita taught business classes (typing, shorthand and English) at Hudson's Bay High School (ongoing for 25 years) while Dick pastored a small but growing congregation for two years. As the new church became established, Dick continued in ministry for many years as part-time Associate Pastor, while returning to his career of teaching high school math. Nita was equally involved in supporting church ministry throughout her life, cheerfully serving as church pianist, Sunday school teacher and VBS director at Crosspointe Baptist Church for 49 years.

Dick and Nita loved to travel. As educators, there was ample summer vacation time to "see the USA in their Chevrolet" (and VW Bug) for annual long family road trips. Each summer they drove from WA to Texas via different routes, sometimes through St. Louis, Florida, or New York to stay connected with family and lifelong friends. Nita's travel goal was visiting state capitals, while Dick's goal was to see MLB games and national parks along the way. They had been in all 50 states by age 55. After retiring from teaching in 1987, Nita and Dick enjoyed many tours and cruises taking them to 61 countries.

When Nita moved to Wenatchee in 2011, she joined Eastmont Baptist Church, senior exercise classes, Bible Study Fellowship, planted flower gardens and made weekly jaunts to the library. As a voracious reader during retirement years, she read three books/week plus daily word puzzles. When the library closed during Covid, she read through the Bible twice! When friends stopped by, she loved to shuffle up a game of bananagrams or dominoes at the kitchen table. As an avid football fan, and true to her Texas roots, she cheered for The

Cowboys unless they were playing The Seahawks. Nita enriched our lives by her lovingkindness, steadfast Christian faith, southern hospitality, wisdom and good humor throughout all the wonderful, yet sometimes tough, seasons of life for nearly a century!

We gratefully acknowledge Dr. McCormick's Confluence hospice team for excellent medical care, along with dear caregiver friends Eva, Maria and Chris.

Nita is survived by daughter, Janice (Bart) Block of Wenatchee; grandson Andrew (Brittney) Block of Idaho; great-granddaughters, Lily and Naila; nephews Harold Key (Grapevine, TX); John Thornton (Huntington Beach, CA); Braxton Gilmore (Lake Hills, TX); Vernon Watkins (Amarillo, TX); Steve and Dan Biggs (Gladewater, TX); nieces Debbie Patterson (Wichita, KS); Tina Simpson (Dallas, TX); Teresa Meyers (Sherman, TX); and Jill Mangum (Sulphur Springs, TX). Arrangements are by Jones and Jones-Betts Funeral Home, Wenatchee.

Friends are welcome to attend a memorial service at Saddlerock Church, 1400 S. Miller, Wenatchee, on Friday, October 24, at noon (reception-lunch following).

Previous Events

Memorial Service

OCT **24**. 12:00 PM (PT)

Saddlerock Evangelical Presbyterian Church
1400 S Miller
Wenatchee, WA 98801

Tribute Wall



“ Mrs. Thornton was my favorite teacher at Hudson Bay High School in throughout my high-school career from 1974-1977. I took so many of her classes. What a wonderful soft spoken and kind person I remember.

Anetta Mabe - May 01 at 12:26 PM

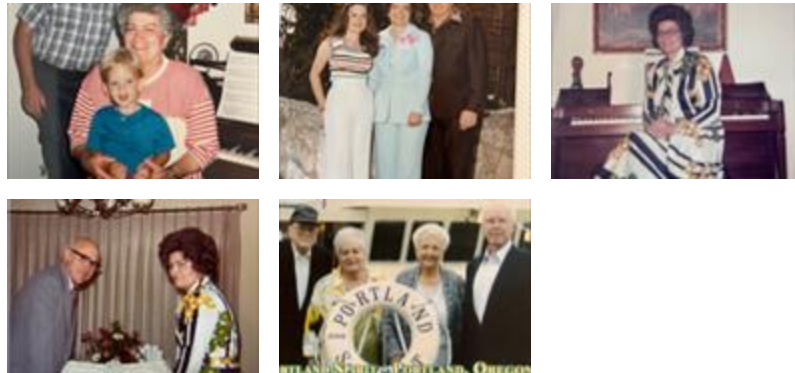


“ Multi-talented Nita. So glad she always had a piano in her home and passed along that skill to Janice. Happy, positive, engaging, big Cowboys and Texas football fan and just plain fun. She will be missed.

Todd and Terry Bennett - October 21, 2025 at 10:53 AM



“ 6 files added to the album Memories Album



Jones & Jones~Betts Funeral Home - October 16, 2025 at 04:28 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Jones & Jones~Betts Funeral Home - October 15, 2025 at 01:30 PM