



Madeline Cornett

November 25, 1930 - October 23, 2025

Madeline Cornett slipped her earthly bonds on October 23, 2025 and joined her beloved husband, Billy Jack Cornett, who preceded her in death. She passed peacefully, surrounded by her children as they sang a hymn, smoothed her hair, and held her hands. She had long anticipated joining her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, yet rejoiced in each day. It was not unusual for her to break into the song “This is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it, “ always followed by “Amen, amen, amen.” She recognized that each day was a gift and maintained her gracious nature until the end, touching the lives of all she encountered. She was quick to profess her steadfast love for Jesus, never knew a stranger, and would often ask to pray with people she’d just met.

She was born on November 25, 1930 to Ruby Kilgore and Charlie Addington in Hueysville, Kentucky. She was a vivid storyteller, weaving tales of her humble origins as a spirited coal miner’s daughter with a stubborn cow named Daisy who refused to come when she called her. Mischievous with wispy blonde hair, she played on a slate dump, hopped trains in rural Virginia, and once hot-wired her uncle’s car. Her father, the company foreman, walked off the job one day over the mistreatment of a fellow miner. Every single man followed him out in solidarity and refused to work until the company made amends. His defiant act shaped young Madeline’s sense of decency and moral character. She inherited a strong work ethic from her industrious

parents. She took tickets at the cinema and developed a business acumen and appreciation for beautiful things while working at the Jewel Box in Norton. She met and married Billy Jack, a local boy who then joined the U.S. Air Force and whisked her off to see the world. Their service took them as far away as the Philippines, Germany, Turkey, Okinawa, and Newfoundland but they never lost touch with their modest beginnings.

Madeline and Billy Jack raised their five children, Kim, Chris, Kelli, Karen, and Kurt across the globe, culturally enriching their lives. They embraced the local customs and cuisine of whichever country they called home and would in turn bring those back to their small mountain town of Appalachia, Virginia. The family saw the Berlin Wall, camped on the beaches of Italy, traversed the Swiss Alps, harvested sugar cane with the locals in the Philippines, and snowmobiled in wintry Canada. Lessons of humility and dignity were imparted throughout; that one's value was intrinsic and how to be as comfortable on a dirt floor as in a king's palace. Their adventurous spirit and appreciation for foreign lands has carried on in the lives of their descendants.

Madeline was a living Epistle and her faith a mighty force that was apparent through her acts of service and Witness. Like the chapters of the dog-eared books she read voraciously, her mission was woven throughout her life. She fed the homeless on the streets of New York City, ministered to American prisoners in Turkey, and visited hospitalized soldiers and their families in Okinawa, where she fostered community through her charity work and built lifelong friendships. The Cornetts expanded the definition of family wherever they were stationed; it was not uncommon for homesick airmen to find a seat at their table. There, they'd find a bountiful feast of Southern staples; fried fish, hushpuppies, coleslaw, and rhubarb cobbler. For decades, her family woke up to the smells of her corn gravy and hand-patted buttermilk biscuits, a meal she'd loved since childhood.

She is survived by her five children, grand children, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren. May her memory be a blessing and her life a testament to her deep faith in Christ. As she so often said, in the words of her adopted Turkish family, "Belly full, eyes on the road." Or in her own words, "I'm ready, even if I don't go." Hers was a life well lived.

A Celebration of Life will take place on her birthday, November 25th, 2025 in Myrtle Beach, with internment to follow in Big Stone Gap, Virginia at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to her favorite charity, Samaritans Purse: www.samaritanspurse.org.

Tribute Wall

MC

“ Marilyn Calick purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Madeline Cornett.



Marilyn Calick - October 28, 2025 at 04:25 PM

MC

“ Marilyn Calick planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Madeline Cornett.

Marilyn Calick - October 28, 2025 at 04:25 PM



“ Madeline, you were such a gift to us in so many ways. Your wisdom, your sense of humor, your hospitality, your loving generosity, your friendship --- and most of all the gift of your daughter Kelli. With eternal love, Sally and Jim

Sally Hare - October 27, 2025 at 03:18 PM

KA

Kelli and family so sorry for your loss 🙏❤️

Kay Alford - October 27, 2025 at 04:04 PM

MS

Madeline was my “spiritual mother” & mentor for three yrs on Okinawa. We remained friends for 45 years. I learned so much from her & am still inspired by her zest for living life to the fullest. What a legacy she left & how I miss her words of wisdom & prayer cover. The best part is yet to come when we will see each other again on the other side.~
Mary Silvey

Mary Silvey - November 04, 2025 at 01:12 PM