



## Mrs. Carolyn O'Lee Walden

March 12, 1940 - April 16, 2026

Carolyn O'Lee Wright Walden, 86, of Sevierville, Tennessee, passed away peacefully on April 16, 2026.

Carolyn, nicknamed "Hot Rod" by childhood friends for her love of fast bike-riding, was born and raised in Guntersville, Alabama. She attended Marshall County High School, where she played clarinet in the band and was crowned Queen of the Guntersville Christmas Parade in 1957.

After high school, she married Jimmy Walden, who shared her adventurous spirit and great sense of humor. Carolyn and Jimmy loved road trips and exploring new places — they lived in Goodlettsville, Tennessee; East Amherst, New York; Huntsville and Madison, Alabama, before retiring to Sevierville, Tennessee.

Carolyn had a lifelong love of working and connecting with people. She worked as an administrative assistant at Dreamboat Manufacturing in Guntersville and Anchor Wire in Goodlettsville, and later as a salesclerk at Park Supply in Huntsville. But one of her greatest

joys began at home—while reading children’s books to her daughter, Lea Ann, she discovered a passion for vintage children’s literature that grew into a love of antique dolls, dishes, and collectibles. For more than 40 years, she sold at antique booths and flea markets, and she and Jimmy delighted in traveling together to estate sales and antique shows. In the antique business, they met many nice people, including some who became cherished lifelong friends.

Carolyn passed her love of children's books on to Lea Ann, and she often helped research hard-to-find books in support of Lea Ann's work in bookstores, libraries, and schools.

In recent years, Carolyn and Lea Ann began collaborating on a children's book of their own -- and greeting cards -- featuring butterflies. Carolyn served as Chief Butterfly Spotter: she sat on the porch in her wheelchair, spotting butterflies and calling out, “There’s one! Over there! Behind you!” laughing as she watched Lea Ann run around the flower garden with a camera.

Like her father, Thomas Wright, Carolyn had a tender heart for animals; she respected and appreciated their ability to love unconditionally. Inspired from childhood by Jane Goodall, Carolyn spent her life caring for and advocating for animals—cats, dogs, chickens, horses, and the many birds and wild creatures she faithfully fed. Her home was always a place where animals were not just welcomed, but cherished.

Another lifelong inspiration was children's author and illustrator Tasha Tudor. Carolyn often said her definition of a beautiful life was one like Tasha's—a humble cottage surrounded by flower gardens, animals, children's books, and a good cup of coffee. She loved underdogs and misfits and had a quiet but determined way of making people feel seen, included, and valued. When Lea Ann was young and learning to write and draw, Carolyn encouraged her to make cards for neighbors—especially the elderly, and especially women without children on Mother's Day—because, as she gently reminded her, “Even though they don't say so, Mother's Day might make them a little sad.” Carolyn was an avid reader who loved stories of quirky characters and small-town life, enjoying authors such as Alexander McCall Smith, Joshilyn Jackson, and Sean Dietrich. A person of quiet faith, she found comfort and inspiration in devotional writings by several authors, especially Joel Osteen. She loved illustrated prayer books for children; Eloise Wilkin was her favorite illustrator. She also had a playful spirit and a wonderful sense of humor. She was known to buy Jimmy a box of her favorite candy for Valentine's Day, led joyful sing-alongs of silly songs on family road trips, and happily danced along with Richard Simmons workouts. She loved flower gardening

and holiday baking, especially making Greek honey cookies each Christmas with Lea Ann. She went to great lengths to make sure Lea Ann had other children in the family to play with -- Saturdays were often spent driving to Marshall County where Lea Ann made many happy memories with cousins Tim, Kim, Kelley, Jane, Wayne, and Brian -- and honorary family members Carolyn, Joey, and Angie Childress, children of Carolyn's best friend Dorothy and husband Buddy. In later years, she loved receiving photos of family members from far away, especially children, and the highlight of her year was when the Alabama cousins brought the kids up to visit each summer. And of course, it wouldn't be summer without a visit from Richard and Barbara, bearing gifts of ice cream sundaes and hilarious stories about Richard's antics involving cousins Curtis, David, tractors, and race cars. Finally, she cherished Jimmy's family, always kind and willing to help -- Larry and Pam, Terry and Darlene, Deb and Darwin, Wayne and Carol and their boys. She was especially close to Jimmy's Aunt Margaret and Uncle Mathis and son Wayne.

Carolyn was a remarkable survivor. In 1985, after being diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer and given a prognosis of five years or less, she underwent major surgery and made the courageous decision to decline chemotherapy and radiation. She went on to live more than four

decades without recurrence. Later in life, following a debilitating back surgery in 2016, she continued to persevere with determination and grace, always working to regain strength and independence.

Carolyn had a deep respect and appreciation for kindness and peacemaking. One of her

favorite prayers was the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, and she carried its message into her

daily life. From an early age, she felt immense respect for senior citizens and believed in

honoring and celebrating their individuality, often quoting Leslie Joseph's poem "Warning":

"When I am old, I shall wear purple..." – which she had framed on her wall.

Carolyn was proud of her roots as the daughter of Thomas Wright, one of the few white

sharecroppers in her area, and Vera Moore Wright, a church organist who instilled in her a love of music and faith.

She loved her family dearly and is survived by her devoted husband of 68 years, Jimmy

Walden; her daughter, Lea Ann Walden; nephew Tim Wright (Christine); brother-in-law Larry

Walden (Pam); first cousins Curtis Byars, Richard Lambert (Barbara), Nova Teal, Elsie Garrison,

Zoya Maxine Atkinson (Rich), and Debbie Ladd (Steve); along with their children and a large,

loving extended family of cousins—too numerous to name, but each dearly loved; her beloved

neighbors June and David Upchurch and Linda Roberts; her precious home health nurses and

therapists: Josh, Christina, Elmer, and Bill (from a previous home health agency); and her wonderful caregivers from Right at Home. She also loved her hairstylists Brandon, Jai, and JoJo.

She was preceded in death by her parents and several cherished aunts and uncles; her beloved brother, military veteran and songwriter Harold Wright; and close cousins Kelley Rutledge Johnston, Hassel Atchley, Amanda Rutledge Whisenant, and Danny Rutledge.

Visitation will be held from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. on April 20, 2026, at Carr Funeral Home, with the funeral service beginning at 2:00 p.m., followed by burial at Marshall Memory Gardens.

Until she became disabled in 2016, Carolyn was a person who was constantly giving to others.

In her later years, when she was no longer able to be out in the world as she once was, she deeply cherished those who continued to call, write, and remember her.

Jimmy and Lea Ann

wish to express their heartfelt gratitude to all who reached out to her during that time. Visits from

Alabama, NC, SC, and Nebraska family meant the world to her, the family thanks younger

cousins Brian, Kim, Amanda, and David who helped make some of those visits possible. She

loved receiving cards and emailed photos from her younger cousins J.D., Elizabeth, and Kim.

Weekly phone calls and cards and letters from Curtis, Richard, and Elsie

sustained her. For someone who had always found joy in lifting others up, those acts of kindness meant more than words can express—and reflected the very love and thoughtfulness she had shared so freely throughout her life.

The family requests that those who wish to honor Carolyn consider adopting a shelter pet, or taking a moment to brighten someone's day—whether by sending or delivering a note of encouragement to a nursing home resident, a soldier far from home, a neighbor, a homeless person, a weary restaurant server, a kind cashier, or anyone else who might need a smile. For those who prefer not to write, even a small gesture—a stuffed animal, balloon, or simple token of kindness—can be a meaningful reminder to someone that they are seen, valued, and loved.

Carolyn loved life, she loved people, and she loved all of God's creatures. As she sits in

Heaven today, she would want you to remember her with joy: surrounded by all of her departed loved ones, eating pineapple sandwiches and chocolate donuts with Danny, Hassel, Amanda, her dad, celebrating Harold's birthday, surrounded by animals, she would tell you she was blessed. And she would want to thank you for being part of her wonderful life.

# Cemetery Details

**Marshall Memory Gardens**

## Previous Events

### Visitation

APR **20**. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Carr Funeral Home  
1960 O'Brig Avenue  
Guntersville, AL 35976  
(256) 582-3411  
carrguntersville@gmail.com

### Funeral Service

APR **20**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Carr Funeral Home  
1960 O'Brig Avenue  
Guntersville, AL 35976  
(256) 582-3411  
carrguntersville@gmail.com

# Tribute Wall

LW

“ 2 files added to the album Carolyn's Wonderful Life



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**Lea Walden** - April 23 at 12:40 AM

LW

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Lea Ann Walden** - April 22 at 10:05 PM

LW

*This photo got stuck in my email queue when sending to the slide show - I am so sorry about that! No story of Mom's life would be complete without the special folks in this photo. She loved y'all with all her heart. And so do Dad and I.*

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**Lea Ann Walden** - April 23 at 02:26 AM



“ 50 files added to the album Life Tributes



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**Carr Funeral Home Guntersville - April 20 at 10:51 AM**