



Peggy Reams Collins Gatlin

August 21, 1932 - December 17, 2025

Peggy Reams Collins Gatlin passed away on December 17, 2025; she was ninety-three. A lifelong resident of Laurel, Mississippi, Mrs. Gatlin was dedicated to her beloved hometown. She was an avid reader of the Laurel Leader Call and curated a collection of the paper's articles throughout her life that give a lovely glimpse into Mrs. Gatlin's life and times in Laurel.

Born on August 21, 1932, to the late Elson Kendall Collins and the late Grace Collins, Mrs. Gatlin's birth is chronicled in a ninety-three-year-old clipping from the Leader Call found among her treasure trove of memorabilia. "Mr. and Mrs. E.K. Collins are receiving congratulations upon the arrival of a beautiful baby daughter, who arrived Sunday, August twenty-first in their home on South Magnolia Street."

A 1936 Leader Call clipping recounts her fourth birthday party where "games were played on the lawn," "ice cream sandwiches were served," and "souvenirs were presented to the little guests." This idyllic Laurel childhood was interrupted in 1942 by World War II. Her father was deployed to the Pacific front, leaving nine-year-old Peggy, her younger sister and mother in Laurel throughout the war and during her father's post-war service as a war crimes prosecutor in Manila. Mrs. Gatlin archived dozens of handwritten letters from the South Pacific, including one dated June 9, 1945, from "Somewhere in the Pacific," to Peggy and her sister from their father. "How

are my two little ladies and what are you two doing now that school is out.” “If I were you, I would take it easy and not try to get into too many things. You know you are both yet just sweet little girls.” “We have traveled a long way and passed many South Sea Islands of which some day I may be able to tell you about.”

While her father was away at war, Mrs. Gatlin’s mother worked as a buyer at Carter-Heidi department store in Laurel, and Peggy helped her mother maintain the household and watch over her younger sister. As a child of World War II, Mrs. Gatlin formed the fearless and independent nature for which she was well known.

Mrs. Gatlin graduated George S. Gardiner High School where she was an outstanding student and made lifelong friends. Throughout her life, she fondly remembered her high school years in Laurel and eagerly attended Gardiner School reunions to see old friends. Another Laurel Leader Call Society Page clipping recounts a bridge party for her sixteenth birthday at the “Blue Room” of the Pinehurst Hotel attended by twenty girls where, “between progressions, cold bottled beverages were passed” and ice cream sundaes were served.

In 1948, she met Joseph (Joe) Gatlin, a handsome young Navy man, who had returned to Laurel after serving on a troop transport ship in the European Theater. Their courtship in Laurel is memorialized by dozens of letters, neatly tied in ribbons and cherished by Mrs. Gatlin. They married at First Presbyterian Church in Laurel on December 20, 1950. The December 21, 1951, Leader Call reported that, “Taking precedence in interest over all other recent social events was the marriage of Miss Peggy Reams Collins.” After a honeymoon in New Orleans, they returned to spend Christmas Eve with their parents in Laurel.

Mrs. Gatlin followed Joe to Ole Miss and on to Atlanta as he studied dentistry at Emory University. They returned to Laurel where Dr. Gatlin practiced

dentistry for thirty years. Mrs. Gatlin assisted Dr. Gatlin in managing his dental practice and was active in dental wives' clubs. She also worked on the political campaigns of her father, former state senator E.K. Collins. She had a keen interest in politics and enjoyed following and discussing politics even in her nineties. In the last year of her life, she was known by her caregivers to “hold her own” in political debate with fellow assisted living residents.

After Dr. Gatlin passed away in 1992, Mrs. Gatlin lived a fiercely independent life in Laurel. She was a fastidious collector and organizer of family memorabilia. Through her steadfast efforts, she preserved a trove of historical documents including handwritten World War I letters from her mother’s family dating back to 1918, annotated photos taken by her husband during his time on a troop transport ship in India, World War II letters from her father, her father’s papers as a war crimes prosecutor in Manila, political memorabilia, and over ninety years of clippings from the Leader Call.

Mrs. Gatlin was a member of multiple garden clubs in Laurel. She served in leadership roles with Laurel Garden clubs, including president of the Council of Garden Clubs where she organized many projects for the beautification of the city. A lover of art and design, she served as a docent for the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, was a nationally accredited flower show judge, and judged floral design at events throughout the southeast. A lifelong member of First Presbyterian Church of Laurel, she held various positions, including church moderator.

In 2024, Mrs. Gatlin moved to Brookdale Assisted Living Facility in Clinton, Mississippi, where she was closer to her children and grandchildren. There she was cared for by compassionate staff who were dedicated to her and appreciated her spunky personality. Her family is thankful for her loving caregivers at Brookdale.

Mrs. Gatlin was preceded in death by her parents Grace Reams Easterling Collins and Elson Kendall Collins, sister Silvia Hood Garber, and her husband Dr. Joseph Savan Gatlin, Jr., all of Laurel.

She is survived by her daughter Kendall Reams Gatlin Parker and granddaughter Virginia Reams Parker Grimes, her son Joseph Savan Gatlin, III, daughter-in-law, Cheri Turnage Gatlin, and grandsons John Elson Gatlin, Louis Joseph Gatlin, Asa Culpepper Gatlin, and Joseph Savan Gatlin IV.

A visitation will be held at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, January 3, 2026, at Memory Chapel in Laurel, Mississippi, followed by graveside services and burial at Lake Park Cemetery in Laurel officiated by Dr. Parry Bridges, Pastor of First-Trinity Presbyterian Church of Laurel at 2:00 p.m.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Council of Garden Clubs for Laurel and Jones County or First-Trinity Presbyterian Church of Laurel.

To sign or view the online guest book, visit www.memorychapel Laurel.com.

Cemetery Details

Lake Park Cemetery

1303 Old Bay Springs Rd
Laurel, MS 39440

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 3. 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM (CT)

Memory Chapel Funeral Home
3100 Audubon Drive
P. O. Box 674
Laurel, MS 39440
(601) 428-5235
memorychapel@comcast.net
<https://www.memorychapellaurel.com/>

Graveside Service

JAN 3. 2:00 PM (CT)

Lake Park Cemetery
1303 Old Bay Springs Rd
Laurel, MS 39440

Tribute Wall

SH

“ I’m Stella Hall of Laurel & I offer prayers & condolences to Peggy’s family! I was speaking acquaintances with Peggy & admired her greatly! Her energy spent through the years with garden clubs was so admirable! RIP Peggy 🙏❤️

Stella M Hall - January 02 at 08:58 PM

CS

“ Chuck, Kathy, Clancy, and Charlie Smith planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Peggy Reams Collins Gatlin.

Chuck, Kathy, Clancy, and Charlie Smith - December 31, 2025 at 08:08 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Peggy Reams Collins Gatlin.



December 31, 2025 at 08:08 PM



“ May God's Peace be with you in your loss, knowing that she is alive and well with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brad Clanton - December 31, 2025 at 07:47 PM



“ Honored to have been her pastor, 2015-16.

Sid Leak - December 20, 2025 at 09:57 AM



“ I considered Peggy a dear friend. She knew my family from South Magnolia Street and my Grandmother's background as a true Southern Belle being raised on a Plantation in North Mississippi. She was a true Southern Lady herself and I admired her tenacity and class of the Old School. She was proud of her background and family, so we shared a common interest in our Ancestry. I have missed our talks and lost touch with her a few years ago. Her passing saddens me but I know she is with her Lord and Savior today. God Bless My Sweet Friend. Sincerely, Marcelle Bartran Harwell

Marcelle Harwell - December 19, 2025 at 10:05 PM

SW

“ It is sad to hear of our Aunt's passing. She lived a full life and was a very independent person. We were able to visit her in Laurel several times over the past years and are sorry we never got to Clinton to visit. I remember when she was pregnant with Kendall while in Atlanta and we visited their cute cottage near Emory. Uncle Joe, Peggy and Kendall spent many Christmas eve dinners at our house in Laurel when Kedall was young and we always enjoyed those family times. Joel came much later in life and was also a joy to his parents. Blessings on Aunt Peggy and her family. Savan Wilby Wilson, 120 Oak Bend Ct, Fairhope, AL

Savan Wilby Wilson - December 19, 2025 at 07:09 PM

BI

“ Sincerest condolences to the family. I have so many memories involving your mom while growing up in the church it would be impossible to share them all. I will lift y'all up in my prayers in the days to come as I know how hard the first holidays without a loved one can be.

Beth Martz Ivy - December 19, 2025 at 05:03 PM