



Brenda Gail Tolliver Michael

May 23, 1941 - July 20, 2025

Brenda Gail Tolliver Michael, 84, of Cullman, Alabama, passed away peacefully on July 20, 2025.

She is survived by her husband of 64 years, Mark Michael; her children, Marc Michael (Brigid), Sean Michael (Kristy), and Elizabeth Wheeler (John); her beloved grandchildren, Grant Michael, Makayla Michael, Scarlett Wheeler, and Gabby Wheeler; her brother, Mike Tolliver (Nancy); and their son, Matthew Tolliver (Melissa). She is also survived by many dear nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Allene and Clyde Tolliver of Florence, Alabama.

Gail loved dogs, and was especially fond of her 12-year-old Maltipoo, Bubba Jack. True to form, Bubba was right by her side on the night she passed.

Born and raised in Florence, Gail graduated from Coffee High School in 1959 and earned her bachelor's degree from the University of North Alabama in 1964. A gifted student with a sharp intellect, Gail later earned a master's degree in counseling—laying the foundation for a life devoted to education and service.

Reading was Gail's favorite pastime. She read thousands of books over the course of her life and was rarely seen without a novel in hand.

Gail began her career as a high school English teacher, but found her true calling as a guidance counselor. At Cullman High School, “Mrs. Michael” touched the lives of countless students with her warmth, insight, and unwavering support. Whether helping students navigate college decisions, career paths, or personal challenges, Gail listened with patience and spoke with care. Her calm, approachable demeanor made her a safe haven for students in crisis—whether they were dealing with broken homes, unplanned pregnancies, or simply struggling to stay in school. She helped many young people find a path forward when they thought they had none.

Gail had a quiet strength and deep empathy that defined her interactions with others. She was a wonderful listener, and her wise counsel made a lasting impact on generations of students and families.

Above all, Gail was a loving mother and grandmother. She took immense pride in her children—Marc, a CEO; Sean, a writer; and Elizabeth, a physician—and celebrated their unique journeys with boundless encouragement.

After retirement, Gail divided her time between homes in Cullman and the Florence area. She had a spirit for adventure, traveling often to visit her children and grandchildren. From Czechoslovakia to England, Germany, and the Pacific Northwest, she was always eager to hop on a plane and explore the world with the people she loved.

When asked to name the greatest lesson she had learned in life, Gail didn’t hesitate.

“All those worries you have—about what somebody thinks about what you’re doing, or what you’re wearing, or how much money you have, or what kind of car you drive—are so useless,” she said. “You’re worrying about the wrong

thing. What's important is centering your thoughts and asking the right questions to find out how you can help the other person.”

Gail spent her life doing just that. She helped not only her own family, but also thousands of other people with quiet strength and an open heart. Her legacy is one of selflessness, grace, and deep compassion.

A celebration of Gail's life will be held on Sunday, August 17, 2025, at 4:00-6:00 P.M. at Loft 212, 212 2nd Ave NE, Cullman, AL 35055. A short service will begin at 5:15 P.M. All who knew and loved her are welcome to attend and share in her memory. Casual attire and bright colors are welcome.

In lieu of flowers, the family invites donations to a fund in Gail's memory benefiting Cullman High School, where she served so faithfully. Contributions will support the installation of a memorial bench on campus and the establishment of an annual scholarship for a deserving CHS student. To contribute, please visit: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/a-lasting-tribute-to-gail-michael-bench-and-scholarship>

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Visitation

AUG 17. 4:00 AM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Loft 212
212 2nd Ave NE
Cullman, AL 35055

Celebration of Life Service

AUG 17. 5:15 PM (CT)

Loft 212
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Cullman, AL 35055