



## Ellen Reece Purnell

February 13, 2026

Ellen Reece Purnell, 93, died peacefully on Friday, February 13, 2026. Her everlasting faith in Christ and love for family comforted her. She was not in pain, and her children were with her.

Ellen Heacock Reece was born in Monessen, PA. Ellen was preceded in death by her loving and charismatic husband, Blaine Sexton Purnell. She is survived by her children, Jennifer Purnell Strode (Rob), Jeffrey Reece Purnell, and Elizabeth Purnell Ward (Adam); nine grandchildren, Cassidy Strode, Brittany Strode Ashida, Michelle Strode, Reece Purnell, Kailey Purnell, Blaine Ward, Zachary Ward, Ryder Ward, and Sydney Ward, and five great-grandchildren, Ben Ashida, Jonah Ashida, Jude Ashida, Luke Strode and Miles Strode.

Ellen grew up in a Quaker family in the lovely town of Millville, PA, and lived most of her adult life in Haddonfield, NJ. Blaine and Ellen spent 57 summers in the Pocono Mountain community of Lake Naomi, PA.

Ellen, along with her sister, attended George School (a preparatory school) in Newtown, PA. She then went to Syracuse University, became a Kappa Kappa Gamma sister, and graduated in the class of 1953 with a BA in Home Economics. Her first job out of college was as a Home Economics teacher in her future husband's hometown of Mifflinburg, PA. New to Mifflinburg, Ellen

met Blaine. On their 3rd date, he told her she was the woman he wanted to marry.

Ellen married Blaine in June of 1956, and their first child, Jennifer, was born in 1958. She won the Mrs. Pennsylvania beauty pageant title in 1959 and was 1st runner-up in the Mrs. America Contest. Ellen, in addition to her skills as a wife and mother, happened to be an excellent archer, a result of being from a hunting family. She became a champion flower arranger and enjoyed that as a lifelong hobby. Ellen played an integral role in her husband's business, The Cracker Barrel. She designed display booths for gift shows to highlight the items they sold and took orders alongside Blaine. Other activities she enjoyed included sailing, skiing, tennis, and golf with Blaine.

Ellen was the “Beautiful Princess,” and the yin to Blaine’s yang, complementing and completing him, and generally (although not always) keeping Blaine out of trouble. She was known for her sweet disposition, her kindness, her acceptance of others, her strong Christian faith, and her love of family.

# Tribute Wall



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**The Groffs Family Funeral and Cremation Services Inc** - March 03 at 10:55 AM

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Sorry for your loss. 🙏

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