



Phyllis A. Howell

July 16, 1935 - September 6, 2025

Dateline: Alice, Texas

Our mom, Phyllis Ann Howell Gunn (née Crabtree), died Saturday, September 6, 2025, at the age of 90. She was born in Liberty, Texas on July 16, 1935 to Thurston Price and Imogene “Mutt” (née Smith) Crabtree. She attended grade school in Daisetta, Texas. One of her early memories from Daisetta was that when she was 12 years old, the windows in her school were all blown out by the Texas City Disaster over 50 miles away. Her family moved to Alice, Texas for work in 1951. Here she attended and graduated from high school.

As a young woman, she embraced adventure and became an airline stewardess, traveling to new places and collecting stories she loved to share. She later returned to Alice, where she met and married Sam Howell and had three children. Over time, she became an “honorary mom” to many more.

In Alice, when we were kids, Mom was always the “cool mom” on the block.

All the neighborhood kids gathered at our little house on the corner. She was also a strikingly beautiful woman. She was glamorous for the little town of Alice, and a showstopper when picking us up from school (“That’s your mom?!”) in her fluorescent green Pinto. Even in later life, strangers approached her in restaurants to tell her what a beautiful smile she had.

When we were very young, she took a job in a fabric store in the mall across the street from our house to make a little extra money for the family. She soon turned that into a fairly lucrative side job sewing custom clothing for people.

She was a very successful seamstress for several years. It was the late ’60s

and early '70s, and, even in small town South Texas, she sewed a lot of patchwork and a lot of serapes.

In about 1984, Mom took a job at the Jerry Smith Gallery in Alice. Jerry, a friend and relative, let her know that he would be adding a one-hour photo lab to his thriving movie rental business and wanted her to manage it. This job eventually became her last working position. His shop was the first place in Alice where you could drop off your film and have your pictures back the same day. It sounds silly now with today's technology, but at the time, it was a huge deal. They trained Mom to run the machine that developed the photos, and she quickly became the go-to person for anyone in Alice who wanted their pictures fast. This was her favorite job, since she got to stand at a counter interacting with people. She knew and loved everyone in town and spent her entire workday visiting with them. She loved this job.

After losing her beloved husband Sam in 1994, Mom spent several years learning how to navigate life on her own. In time, a familiar face became something more. John Gunn became the great love of her later years. With John, she found companionship, laughter, and a sense of joy. Their time together brought her a renewed spark, and those who knew her could see how deeply she loved and was loved in return. It was a happiness that seemed to linger in her, even as the years went on.

Mom lost her hearing eventually, but her eyesight remained sharp. She saw everything and never failed to find humor in every situation. Even later in life, when she was much less physically capable and had begun showing signs of mental decline, she never lost her timing. You had to listen closely, but she still had it going on and was still cracking wise.

We all loved her and felt lucky that she was our mom. She was a great old gal and a hoot to be around. We will all miss her very much.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Thurston and Mutt; her stepfather, E.T. "Red" Petty; her stepson, Jimmy Howell, and her two husbands, Sam Howell and John Gunn.

She is survived by her children: daughter Chere Waters (Anthony) of Creede,

Colorado; son Cliff Howell (Beth) of Austin, Texas; daughter Lisa Howell of Crescent City, California; daughter in Law, Brenda Sikorski (Danny) of Bryan Texas, honorary daughter Jennifer Machin-Hart of Crescent City, California; and her lifelong daughter of the heart and sister in law, Sara Gunn Meche (Rick) of Aransas Pass, Texas.

She also leaves behind her grandchildren and great grandchildren: granddaughter Hailey Waters-Johnson (Brian) of Panama City Beach, Florida and their boys Jett and Cruze Johnson, granddaughter Hanna Waters of San Antonio, Texas, grandson Kyote Brennand of Austin, Texas, granddaughter Holley Howell of College Station, Texas and her daughter Kaylin Hack, granddaughter Michelle Hervey (Aaron) of Ledbetter, Texas, and grandson Ashton Hart of Crescent City, California.

Mom was also blessed with many whom she loved deeply and considered part of her family, including honorary children Linda Millard, Janet Herron, John Roquet, Ty Gardiner, Joey Bravo, and many others.

The family would especially like to thank Sara Meche for her love, devotion, and the generous care she gave. After John's passing, Rick and Sara opened their hearts and their home to her, becoming her steady source of comfort, support, and companionship. They have been her constant through every season of life since then - her advocates, her safe place, and her everything. The family will forever be grateful for the love and devotion they poured into her life.

Services entrusted to Roberson Funeral Home Alice, Tx

In lieu of Floral arrangements, please donate to Pee Wee's Pet Rescue.

Previous Events

Memorial Graveside Service

OCT **25**. 5:00 PM - 5:30 PM (CT)

Alice Cemetery
1130 Martin Luther King Rd
Alice, TX 78332

Tribute Wall

JR

“ John Roquet planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Phyllis A. Howell.

John Roquet - October 25, 2025 at 01:49 AM

JR

“ John Roquet purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Phyllis A. Howell.



John Roquet - October 25, 2025 at 01:49 AM

CW

“ My best memory of Phyllis is how welcoming she was to me when I first moved to Texas in 2000. We worked together in Alice, and she became a loving friend with a big heart the size of Texas and a beautiful smile to match. I will always love you and thank you for all the laughs and talks. I loved your sense of humor! Thank you from the bottom of my heart for accepting my daughter Rachel and I like family. You are Memaw to us all.
Much Love and gratitude, Carey xox

Carey Waters - October 22, 2025 at 04:14 PM