



Wilma J. Gillette

October 3, 1929 - August 25, 2022

Wilma J. Gillette, 92 of Woodland, California, died on Thursday, August 25, 2022, in Reedley, California.

Wilma Jeannette Seese was born on October 3, 1929 to Charles and Pauline Seese in Monterey Park, CA. She attended Monte Vista Elementary School, Garvey Middle School, and Mark Keppel High School of Alhambra, graduating in 1946. Wilma had two older brothers; Shelby, born on June 14, 1927 and Lloyd who was 4 at the time of her birth. Lloyd's mother was deceased and he lived with his maternal grandparents until high school when he then joined this father and stepmother in Monterey Park.

The family moved to Bakersfield during Wilma's later high school years, but she stayed with friends in Alhambra to finish high school at Mark Keppel. She would often visit her parents in Bakersfield until her graduation from High School. It was during one of these visits that she met Fred Valov, Jr. Her parents had moved out into the country next to the Valov family where Wilma made friends with Fred's sisters, who eventually introduced the two. They started dating after she moved to Bakersfield after her graduation. Romance soon blossomed into love and an engagement followed. They were married October 2, 1948, a day before her 19th birthday.

Added to this union of Fred and Wilma were four children: Manya Pauline,

Fred F., Michael F., and Susan F. Wilma was a busy homemaker; cooking, and caring for her husband and children. Some of the children remember her enjoyment of growing beautiful dahlias along their driveway. They enjoyed living out in the country next to the slough (The Friant Kern Canal) that provided lots of sand and water fun. Fred was busy making a living hauling hay and farming. Their life was busy but good with church, school activities and kind loving neighbors. The fact that the pair were Fred and Wilma from the fifties cartoon "The Flintstones" was a fun novelty.

However, on March 4, 1964, Fred, at the young age of 35 was tragically killed in a tractor accident on the farm. Wilma's world changed instantly. This was only a few months after the family had moved into a newly remodeled home and only months after their new commitment to following Jesus.

Wilma had never worked outside the home and these were very difficult days for her. She bravely rose to the occasion as best she knew how to be a young widow with four children, ages ranging from 8-13. She graciously found employment through a friend in their furniture store where she was able to earn furniture for their fairly new home that was sparsely furnished. God provided the family with compassion, love, and so much help through their neighborhood's Rosedale Bible Church following Fred's death.

They helped with needed projects like putting in a sprinkler system, giving the kids rides to youth activities and moral support to a young widow with four growing children. Wilma's faith in God grew as she depended on Him and his guidance during this time.

In 1966, after attending her 20th High School reunion, she reconnected with a classmate Robert Gillette. They were acquaintances in high school, but things changed after that reunion. The children were soon seeing Bob come over for visits all the way from Woodland, CA. The two soon decided to marry. Wilma and her four children moved into the large two story house on First Street.

Two boys of Bob's, David Charles and Robert Jr. joined the family which made them a family of eight. There were some adjustments to be made and Wilma worked hard as a dedicated homemaker and new wife. She and Bob did a lot of remodeling of the two different houses that the family lived in subsequently. There wasn't much leisure time during this phase of their lives.

Wilma proved to be a loving and caring mother all these years by doing the best she knew how. She did some sewing for the girls when they were younger, but by the time she was 38, Kelli was born followed by Dawn, at age 39. There seemed less time for extra activities. She continued to keep the home for the family and it always seemed to be clean with food on the table!

As her children grew and married, and grandchildren came along, her door was open to many of them. During their preschool years and school years to follow, she watched many of them as their parents were at work and Grandma's house was a familiar place.

Wilma and Bob served on the church social committee and many church spaghetti dinners were served during those years. She and Bob enjoyed traveling to the Holy Land and taking several trips with Kelli and Dawn and friends through the US, Canada, and Mexico in their motorhome. They enjoyed riding their quads on the beach in Mexico. She loved collecting shells on the beach on those trips and loved to go to the ocean whenever she could.

For many years she served at Woodland Memorial hospital as a pink lady and had a servants heart towards people. She faithfully kept in contact with childhood friends Peaches Thrapp and Rosemarie Thompson and she had many many fond memories of times spent together over the years.

In her "retirement" years Wilma spent a lot of time meeting friends for coffee at

McDonald's and then shopping at one of her favorite stores "Sally's", commonly known as The Salvation Army thrift store. She collected object after object that she knew had some value but she picked up for a quarter or fifty cents. She shared her finds with family and friends as most of our cupboards can attest. Her rescue maltese poodles Corky and Tinker Bell were also treasured companions during these years.

During Bob's last days he suffered from congestive heart failure. She unselfishly cared for him until the end of his life. She herself lived her final years under the care of St. John's Retirement Village in Woodland until its closing in the spring of this year. She spent her final months in Reedley at Palm Village, which proved a difficult move, and was cared for there until her final breath on August 25, 2022. Our family can confidently say that she is at home with Jesus, suffering no more. Her mind, her hearing, and her body are forever healed in the presence of her Savior.

Wilma is survived by 5 of her 8 children: Manya, David, Susan, Kelli, and Dawn; 11 grandchildren and 22 great grandchildren.

Graveside services were held 10am, Wednesday, September 14th, 2022 at Shafter Cemetery, 18662 Santa Fe Way, Shafter, California 93263.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Creighton Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.

Previous Events

Graveside

SEP **14**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PT)

Shafter Cemetery
18662 Santa Fe Way
Shafter, CA 93263

Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Creighton Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Wilma J. Gillette* ”



Salser & Dillard Creighton Chapel - October 05, 2022 at 11:41 AM