



Virginia Irene Carnes McLeroy Holt

July 6, 1929 - July 26, 2025

Virginia Irene Carnes McLeroy Holt, 96, of Eatonton, passed away peacefully on July 26, 2025. Irene was born July 6, 1929 in Eatonton, Georgia to the late S. T. "Billy" and Mattie Linch Carnes.

After graduating from Eatonton High School, she worked for her father in his little local restaurant where she met a handsome soldier returning from the war. After striking up a courtship, they married and began raising their family in Eatonton. Both Irene and Bob McLeroy worked at Rock Eagle 4-H Center. She was the Center's Food Service Director and he was the head of their maintenance department. After Bob's tragic death at Rock Eagle, Irene continued working there as the head of food operations, where she devoted her life, skills and love to the place that became her second home.

In 1963, Irene married John Jennings (Johnny) Holt, Jr. and they built their home and life together while raising Eddie and Kaye. They were among the founding families of Gatewood Schools.

They loved to travel together to the coast in their plane, taking off from their airstrip in the field behind their house. They loved gardening, cooking together, and entertaining friends.

After 37 years of dedicated service to The University of Georgia and Rock

Eagle 4-H Center, she retired in 1993 to devote time to her family and other interests.

Irene faithfully served her church, The First Methodist Church of Eatonton, where she was an active member of the Robinson Dance Sunday School Class and the Women's Night Circle where she served on various committees.

Irene was also one of the founding members of the Uncle Remus Golf Course. She was an active Putnam General Hospital Auxiliary member, where she gave her time and talents to serve as a Pink Lady. She also devoted her time to the Putnam County Superior Court, where she served as a Bailiff for many years.

Irene had varied interests, which included cooking and baking, playing cards, bingo, and dominoes, and traveling and socializing with her friends, lovingly called "The Golden Girls." She was an avid Atlanta Braves and Georgia Bulldog fan. As a season ticket holder for more than thirty years, she enjoyed tailgating and cheering on the Dawgs with her closest friends. She had a reputation at Sanford Stadium for her delicious fried chicken and pimento cheese! Friends aside, her most treasured times were those spent with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Irene is preceded in death by her loving parents; her two brothers, Carlton Carnes and Linwood Carnes; and three sisters, Florence Carnes Embry, Dorothy Ann "Dot" Carnes Lundy, and Frances Carnes Allen. She is also preceded in death by her husbands Robert William "Bob" McLeroy, and John Jennings (Johnny) Holt, Jr.; and stepson Jerrold Keith (Jerry) Holt.

Her legacy lives on through her three children, Robert Edward "Eddie" McLeroy (Ann) of Eatonton, Ga.; Kaye McLeroy Copelan (Jesse) of Eatonton,

Ga.; and Johnny Jennings Holt, III (Connie) of Buckhead, Ga.; grandsons, Bill McLeroy, Chad McLeroy and Johnny Jennings Holt, IV; granddaughter, Lori Holt; great grandchildren, Jillian McLeroy, Stella Palmer, Piper McLeroy, Erika Holt Stolley, Emily Holt, Tad Holt, Marlee Samuels and Aubrey Samuels; great-great grandchildren, Copelan Holt, Eleanor Holt, Colbie Stolley and Addison Leverett, as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

Irene also had many sweet personal care-givers at The Harbor Assisted Living that became like family to her. She was also lovingly cared for in her final years by a few special “Angels” whom she loved dearly, Risa Soloman, Sharmeka Cunningham, Tlisa Wynn, Mary Robinson, Faye Chester, and Jan Lewis.

The family will receive friends at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 30, 2025 in the Historic Sanctuary of Eatonton First Methodist Church followed by the funeral service at 11:00 a.m. Afterwards, the graveside service will be held at Eatonton Memorial Park (across from the National Guard Armory).

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to Eatonton First Methodist Church, Rock Eagle 4-H Center, or Gatewood Schools.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 30. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Eatonton First United Methodist Church
103 W Magnolia St
Eatonton, GA 31024

Funeral Service

JUL 30. 11:00 AM (ET)

Eatonton First United Methodist Church
103 W Magnolia St
Eatonton, GA 31024

Burial

JUL 30 (ET)

Eatonton Memorial Park
Godfrey Rd.
Eatonton, GA 31024

Tribute Wall

VM

“ Prayers for family and friends. Wonderful Aunt Irene. Love you Kaye

Veronica Mcleroy - December 05, 2025 at 02:56 AM

DD

“ She was a beautiful lady inside and out.

Debbie Royal Darracott - August 24, 2025 at 10:14 PM

WS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Williams Staff - August 01, 2025 at 01:25 PM

LJ

“ What an easy woman to love! She came into my life when I married Cecil & Marge Johnson's son Jim. She was a friend within two minutes of our meeting.. I so enjoyed my time with her and her sister Dot. I was so lucky to know this sweet woman.
Lois Johnson

Lois Johnson - July 29, 2025 at 08:53 PM

JD

“ As a Rock Eagle Counselor and later as an Extension Agent, I valued her friendship. I did not know Kaye but Eddie was a trusted helper at the wildlife house. Johnnie Dekle

Johnnie Dekle - July 29, 2025 at 04:08 PM

PA

“ I worked with her and Bob at Rock Eagle. She was special to me! A beautiful lady. I remember when Bob was killed on the job! Irene was one sweet spirit. I loved her! Pat Hunt

pat - July 28, 2025 at 03:39 PM

EC

“ Steve and I always enjoyed our time spent with Aunt Irene. She was a sweet lady with the biggest heart. Heaven certainly gained a beautiful Angel when she arrived there! Our prayers are with all who mourn her loss. 🙏
Elaine and Steve Carnes



Elaine Carnes - July 28, 2025 at 11:26 AM

NK

Aunt Irene was beautiful inside and out. She was kind and full of grace and we loved her very much! It warms my heart to have confidence that she is with her Lord...and so many loved ones. I'll never forget her smile!

Nancy (Allen) Kurkowski

Nancy Kurkowski - July 28, 2025 at 04:26 PM

JH

Kaye sorry for your loss. Praying for you and your family

Judy Hodnett - July 29, 2025 at 10:01 AM

NH

She was indeed a lovely lady. As a Rock Eagle counselor starting in 1958 I knew she and Bob well. Bob's untimely death was a blow to all of us. Our condolences to the family.

Ned and Laura Hamil

Ned Hamil - July 29, 2025 at 03:59 PM

JW

Always loved Irene. Memories of her from over 75 years ago are flooding my thoughts now. Jene Welch

Jene Welch - July 30, 2025 at 12:29 AM