



## Sunny Wilkens Ernst

May 29, 1942 - November 15, 2021

Sunny Ernst entered eternal life on Monday, the 15th of November 2021, and rests in the arms of God.

Born in Galveston, Texas on the 29th of May 1942, the daughter of Nina Derry Murphey Wilkens and Richard Barlow Wilkens, Jr. She attended Lamar High School in Houston and The University of Texas at Austin where she was a member of Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. She made many lifelong Zeta friends and met her husband Robert "Bob" Clinton Ernst while attending college. They married in 1963, and a year later moved to Huntsville, Texas to raise a family and work in Bob's family retail businesses. For four decades they owned and managed Ernst Jewelers and Mt. Vernon Gift Shop, two of the oldest stores on the Downtown Square.

A vivacious philanthropist, Sunny donated her time and heart to many charitable causes. She held numerous advisor positions for Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. Bob and Sunny founded and hosted in their Lake Travis home an annual outing for teenagers with cancer in conjunction with The Sunshine Kids. The Teen Lake Escape has continued for 29 years. More recently, Sunny was an avid volunteer at ROCK, a provider of equine-assisted therapy where she enjoyed being a handler alongside her horse Scooter, serving on its Board of Directors, and President of the Horseshoe Club.

Those who knew Sunny well would say that her name was perfect as she was gracious, giving and kind to everyone she encountered in life. Her family was her world, and she was affectionately known as "Gram". Her selfless spirit and

bright light will live on far beyond her years on earth.

Sunny is survived by her loving husband Bob of 58 years and their children, Cathryn Ernst Ramirez and husband David, and their children, Ashley and Ryan of San Diego, CA; Robert Clinton Ernst Jr. and wife Blythe and their children, Taylor, Cade and Issa of Huntsville; and Richard Lange Ernst and wife Kristin and their children, Elizabeth and Wilson of Austin; sister-in-law Sandy Pratt Wilkens, niece Derry Wilkens, and nephew Richard Wilkens IV and his family. Sunny was preceded in death by her parents, stepmother Louise Stengel Wilkens, and brother Richard Barlow Wilkens III.

Family and friends are invited to Sunny's Life Celebration at 2:00 pm, on Monday, November 22, 2021, at the First United Methodist Church, 1016 Sam Houston Avenue, Huntsville, Texas with reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift in her honor to ROCK-Ride on Center for Kids, P. O. Box 2422, Georgetown, TX 78627 or [www.rockride.org](http://www.rockride.org).

Memorial condolences may be made to the family at [www.shmfh.com](http://www.shmfh.com).

You may view Sunny's memorial tribute at the following link: <https://www.tributeslides.com/tributes/show/4LCKZ23MCX4ZHYQC>

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

NOV **22**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

First United Methodist Church of Huntsville  
1016 Sam Houston Ave.  
Huntsville, TX 77340

# Tribute Wall



“ *Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Sunny Wilkens Ernst*



-----  
**Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home** - November 22, 2021 at 10:24 AM

DV

*What a Beauty and Beautiful life. Prayers today for family and friends*



-----  
**Donna Vick** - November 22, 2021 at 11:07 AM



“ *Sunny Wilkens Ernst*

-----  
November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM

JR

“ *Jerry & Sue Register lit a candle in memory of Sunny Wilkens Ernst*



-----  
**Jerry & Sue Register** - November 21, 2021 at 02:28 PM

KM

“ Sunny was the kindest, most generous person I've ever known. She touched the lives of so many, and was a special inspiration to each of us fortunate enough to have known her. I will miss my wonderful friend terribly, and my heart and prayers go out to her family.  
Kaylah McCord

---

**Kayah McCord** - November 21, 2021 at 02:23 PM

CS

“ Sunny and I were Zetas together. I have fond memories of her when we were at the University of Texas. As we got older, I was active in our local alumna chapter in Austin, and Sunny moved up to her work with our national Zeta organization. It was a lovely association, working together. I always felt that her name, Sunny, was a true description of her personality...always smiling and positive. I am sorry that you, her family, have lost her, but I believe that there are many wonderful stories to tell about her that will make you smile.  
Carol Ann Johnson Strickland  
Austin, TX

---

**carol strickland** - November 20, 2021 at 09:38 AM

CC

“ Chuck Clements lit a candle in memory of Sunny Wilkens Ernst



---

**Chuck Clements** - November 20, 2021 at 12:06 AM

KK

“ During this time of sorrow and brokenness I look toward Heaven to thank my Lord for allowing my path to cross hers. Sunny is not someone you casually meet, but remember. Over the years we shared life at ROCK during the scorching Texas heat with a sweaty, grimy, gritty look that no one can understand unless you've put your boots in our dirt. To think of ROCK without Sunny is unthinkable, but just as it was in so many areas of her life, she sprinkled a legacy wherever she served. It was my honor to serve under her leadership on the Horseshoe Club Committee and watch one of the most selfless ladies lead with such grace and gratitude. Sunny will be missed is an understatement, the void is painful, but what she taught us through her actions will be built upon to pay it forward. May hugs, prayers, and the endless love of the Father be of comfort.

---

**Kathy Kelley** - November 19, 2021 at 08:50 PM

JH

“ Dear Bob & Family,  
We are sorry for your loss and we grieve with you and your family.  
Sunny was a special lady and will be missed by all.  
Our deepest condolences,  
Jo & Stan Hines

---

**Jo & Stan Hines** - November 19, 2021 at 07:05 PM

DM

“ Sunny was my first friend when we moved to Huntsville in 1969. We were blessed to be her neighbor. We became friends and she introduced me to her friends and made us feel so loved and welcome. Her kindness will always live in my heart. I am so sad. ☐  
You have my deepest heartfelt sympathy. Huntsville lost a lady with a kind, and loving heart. I feel so blessed to have been her friend ☐

---

**Derril Mitchell** - November 19, 2021 at 01:16 PM

RM

“ Sunny was an integral part of my experience while volunteering at ROCK. I became fast friends with Sunny as she always greeted me with her sweet smile. I will miss Sunny but know she will live on in my heart & fond memories. She was a blessing to me & so many others. I pray for peace & comfort that only our God can supply to Sunny's family. God bless.

Robbie Mitchell - November 19, 2021 at 12:12 AM

SM

“ Sunny and I were both volunteers with ROCK, serving side by side in classes and on the Horseshoe Club committee. She was such an inspiration to me with her graceful ways, kindness and loving heart. I am honored to call her friend and will find comfort in my beautiful memories of her.

Susan McCrickard - November 18, 2021 at 08:29 PM

LH

“ We are so sorry to hear that Sonny passed away. She was a wonderful lady and will be missed by so many friends and family members. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family at this sad time.

Lynda and Tom Henry

Lynda Henry - November 18, 2021 at 08:14 PM

RM

“ Rhonda Mauldin lit a candle in memory of Sunny Wilkens Ernst



Rhonda Mauldin - November 18, 2021 at 07:37 PM

LF

“ *Sonny was an angel on earth. I don't think she was ever unkind to any one. A lady always. I will miss seeing her smiling face. I'm so sorry for your loss Bobby 🙏❤️*

Linda Wells Farmer - November 18, 2021 at 02:37 PM

JJ

“ *Huntsville has lost a shining star in Sunny Ernst. Sunny, along with the entire Ernst family, has always been so kind to me. My heart hurts so much. Sunny will be missed but I feel blessed to have known her and called her my friend.*

Jeannine Jacoby - November 18, 2021 at 07:19 AM



“ *Touching Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Sunny Wilkens Ernst.*



November 18, 2021 at 12:09 AM

SG

“ *Sunny was a truly lovely person with beautiful poise and a loving heart always reaching out to others. She will be missed in Huntsville, as well as, in the Zeta Tau Alpha Alumnae happenings. Everyone in all walks of life liked to hear what Sunny's thoughts were. May God bless and comfort all of her family and friends and acquaintances regarding her passing. We were so fortunate to have rubbed elbows with her.*

Susan Garrett - November 17, 2021 at 06:57 PM

JP

“ So sorry to hear of your loss Prayers for family and friends



Jerry Peterson - November 17, 2021 at 02:45 PM

GB

“ I was very sad to hear of the loss of Sunny! We go back along time , when she did her student teaching while I was teaching at HHS! We used to have a lot of laughs! Then seeing her children swim inthe original Elkins Lakers Swim team! Always supportive and always smiling! I am sure she will be missed by many and especially her family! I send my deepest condolences. I am sad!

grace bohan - November 17, 2021 at 01:45 PM

RF

“ My thoughts and prayers are with the family.

Robyn Flowers - November 17, 2021 at 09:55 AM

EC

“ Earl and I send our deepest sympathies and prayers. A wonderful person Sunny was. A deep love and respect for her family. She leaves behind some great family to carry on her legacy

Earl & Sherry Carter - November 17, 2021 at 09:46 AM

DS

“ So sorry for your loss.

Delta Skaggs - November 17, 2021 at 09:31 AM

MW

“ *I am so sorry for your loss.*



---

**Mellicent Wiley** - November 17, 2021 at 08:33 AM

CN

“ *Clay Newcomb & Frances Newcomb lit a candle in memory of Sunny Wilkens Ernst*



---

**Clay Newcomb & Frances Newcomb** - November 17, 2021 at 08:06 AM

MH

“ *M. Hyvl sent a virtual gift in memory of Sunny Wilkens Ernst*



---

**M. Hyvl** - November 16, 2021 at 07:58 PM

BN

*Bobby and family. So sorry for your loss. Sunny was always so kind to our class, offering a place for us to gather for breakfast. I have been praying for her daily. God had other plans. My condolences to you all. She will be missed. Call on the class of '58 for help. You are a special member.*

---

**Beverly Niederhofer** - November 21, 2021 at 01:46 PM