



Arbutus Fay Messer

June 15, 1944 - September 2, 2026

Wheeling, West Virginia

Arbutus Fay Messer died in Wheeling on September 2, 2026. She was eighty-two. Born there on June 15, 1944, she grew up knowing glass as a rumor that paid and a furnace as a neighbor that never slept. She learned a pontil before she learned a highway. A gather, she said, is a promise: it holds, or the whole story comes apart in the dark.

She spent twenty-two years in a glass-house cafeteria, then another decade as a clerk in the same plant's time office. She arrived early. She did not advertise. Foremen called her because she would write up a bad punch even when the shift was already called. She charged a fair hour on the side when a church van needed a lift more than a sermon. She kept a notebook of crews, not clients.

She married Ellis Messer in 1965. They raised three children in a frame house that needed a new porch every twenty years. Ellis kept the garden and the choir. Arbutus grilled on Sundays and considered a plate of smoked chicken a seasonal obligation. After her knees quit the worst stairs she still came out for a favorite crew, moving slower, doing the same honest work.

Friends remember a woman who wiped her hands before she shook yours, who could stand in a noise without making it a personality, and who left a desk cleaner than she found it. She loved the river at evening, a glass of tea she did not finish, and the sound of a furnace that had decided to live. She died in Wheeling, in the city whose glass had written her calendar. The house still starts. Someone else will hear the knock that means trouble.

Services

Visitation in Wheeling, then a simple service. A gift to a glass-workers' fund or a neighborhood pantry is welcome.

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