



Bertha Mae Killingsworth

August 22, 1950 - September 7, 2026

Waco, Texas

Bertha Mae Killingsworth died in Waco on September 7, 2026. She was seventy-six. Born there on August 22, 1950, she grew up knowing the river as a weekday neighbor, and she learned a steam table before she learned a highway. A tray, she said, is a kind of sentence: it has to arrive complete.

She spent twenty-six years feeding children in a brick elementary that did not look like the brochures. She started washing pans. She ended running a breakfast that had to catch kids who came in late from a pickup that had already been working since dark. She kept extra milk without making a speech about it. When a storm closed the buses she still opened the kitchen, because weather is not an excuse to skip a meal.

She married Rafael Killingsworth in 1972. They raised a daughter and a son in a bungalow with a pecan that dropped more work than shade. Rafael drove a delivery van. Bertha packed lunches that could survive humidity. After he died in 2015 she kept his chair for a year and then gave it to a grandson who needed a place to do homework.

Neighbors remember a woman who brought tamales to a night shift without staying for thanks, who knew which intern needed a second explanation, and who could hear a rice pot without looking. She loved a late-summer tomato, a clean map of the lunch count, and the particular quiet after the last tray. She died in Waco, in the heat she had always preferred to a clean cold. The line is still moving. Someone else will count the milk.

Services

A gathering in Waco in the evening. A gift to a school meal program suits her.

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