



Celestine Inez Broadnax

March 22, 1943 - September 6, 2026

Washington, District of Columbia

Celestine Inez Broadnax died in Washington on September 6, 2026. She was eighty-three. Born there on March 22, 1943, she grew up in a house where the church bulletin was treated as a legal document and a pot of beans was treated as a ministry. She learned a steam table before she learned the Mall. A correct count, she said, is a form of respect.

She spent twenty-nine years in a federal cafeteria that fed people who argued about hearings over gravy. She started washing hotel pans that never quite came clean. She ended running a breakfast line that had to catch clerks who came in late from a bus that had already been working since dark. She kept extra milk without making a speech about it. When a snow day emptied the building, she still came in to check the freezers because she did not trust a thermostat the way she trusted her own hand on a handle.

She married Howard Broadnax in 1964. He sold insurance and died in 2001. They raised a son and a daughter who still argue about who got the last piece of caramel cake. Celestine kept the garden of cannas, and the habit of leaving a casserole on a porch without a speech. She sat through long meetings the way other people sit through weather.

Grandchildren remember a woman who corrected their thank-you notes more than their homework, who kept a biscuit tin of paper clips, and who could name every auntie in the sanctuary by the hat she no longer wore. She died in Washington, in the heat she had always said you could live with if you dressed for it. The line is someone else's now. The patience she practiced there is harder to replace than a steam table.

Services

A funeral in Washington with one familiar hymn, sung slowly. A gift to a church benevolence fund is welcome.

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