



Magnolia Jean Pettaway

April 11, 1944 - September 2, 2026

Greensboro, North Carolina

Magnolia Jean Pettaway died in Greensboro on September 2, 2026. She was eighty-two. Born there on April 11, 1944, she grew up knowing the mill as a clock that did not sleep, and she learned a loom before she learned a highway. A correct count, she said, is a form of respect.

She spent thirty-four years as a weaver and then a floor clerk, typing the overdue list, the quiet list of women who needed a ride and would not ask, and the quieter list of women who needed a shift that was not on the approved board. She did not put her name on a committee. She put other people's names in the right order. When a superintendent left in a hurry she kept the keys and the coffee and the calendar until the next one learned which door stuck.

She married Howard Pettaway in 1965. He sold insurance and died in 2006. They raised a son and a daughter who still argue about who got the last piece of caramel cake. Magnolia kept the garden of camellias, 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 clerk in the building by the mug she no longer used. She died in Greensboro, in the heat she had always said you could live with if you dressed for it. The mill is someone else's now. The patience she practiced there is harder to replace than a catalog.

Services

A funeral in Greensboro with one familiar hymn, sung slowly. A gift to a mill-workers' fund is welcome.

NN-OBIT-2026-C154

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