



Pearl Esther Vines

December 2, 1938 - September 5, 2026

Wilmington, Delaware

Pearl Esther Vines died in Wilmington on September 5, 2026. She was eighty-seven. Born there on December 2, 1938, she grew up knowing the river as work and the plant as a rumor that paid. She learned a pipette before the schools were finished arguing about who could sit where. A clean measurement, she said, does not care who is holding the glass.

She spent thirty-one years as a laboratory technician, first washing glass, later running assays that other people put their names on. She did not call herself a scientist. She called herself careful, which she treated as a moral category. When the company changed names she kept the same locker and the same thermos. Younger women came to her because she would tell them if a supervisor was bluffing.

She married Louis Vines in 1961. They bought a row house that needed storm windows and a daughter who needed a ride to the library. Louis drove a city bus. Pearl kept the choir and the rule that you do not start eating until the person who cooked sits down. After the lab slowed she volunteered at a clinic that needed someone who could still read a label at speed.

Friends remember a woman who shoveled more than her own walk, who could name every hymn of 1963 if you made the mistake of doubting her, and who sat on the stoop in October as if the block were a committee. She loved a Friday fish, a clean bench, and the river when it looked like steel. She died in Wilmington, the small state she refused to apologize for. The glassware is someone else's now. The care she practiced there is harder to replace than a protocol.

Services

A service in Wilmington, then a hall with coffee. A gift to a clinic or a girls' science fund is welcome.

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