



Melissa Karen Hedrick

June 16, 1950 - May 13, 2026

Some people leave behind memories; others leave behind a legacy of kindness. Melissa Karen Hedrick left both.

Karen passed away on May 13, 2026, at the age of 75, reunited with her beloved husband, Thomas Wade Hedrick; her parents, William Anderson “Billy” Yount and Clara Maxine Williams Yount; and her sister, Lydia Sharon Sellars, who preceded her in death.

She is lovingly remembered by her daughters, Bethany Braswell (Kandy) and Laura Miller (Jim); her sisters, Kathy Bush (Terry) and Donna Saulsburry (Mike); her nieces and nephews, John Trollinger, Dr. Rachel Coker (Stacy), Chaz Saulsburry (Abby), Kelly Blazer (Dustin), and Lindsey Wilson (Joe); her grandchildren, Karie Braswell (Cam), Sam Miller, Sagan Miller, and Bryson Miller; and her great-granddaughters, Iris and Zayli “Tater,” all of whom brought immense pride and joy to her life.

Karen was a poet, author, educator, lecturer, campaign manager, self-taught dulcimer musician, amazing cook, family genealogist, naturalist, activist, fighter, debater, world traveler, and scholar. She was never defined by a single job, title, or place of residence. Likewise, she was known not for just one talent, but for many.

Karen wrote poetry and authored two books—one on her family’s genealogy and another cookbook featuring family recipes and stories, which she created entirely from her cellphone!

Karen was a humble badass and a force of nature. While many knew her as a

loving mother, sister, and grandmother, fewer knew she was instrumental in helping start a soup kitchen in her hometown, where she worked tirelessly to help neighbors in need. She also filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of her children and other children in need of free school breakfast. As noted by the Citizen Tribune in 1984, “the case could affect 370 schools across Tennessee.”

She volunteered at the RAM clinic and many other organizations, and wherever she lived, she immersed herself in community service. As an activist, she marched, protested, and fought for equality, health care, education, and basic human rights for all.

Though her family grieves her loss, they take comfort in knowing that her love, generosity, and spirit live on in the many lives she touched.

A celebration of life will be held on June 13, with the location to be determined. Any flowers, donations, or gifts should be held until the celebration of life.