



## Mrs. Thelma Wilkes

July 20, 1924 - November 20, 2013

Thelma Wilkes

July 20, 1924 – November 20, 2013

Thelma Wilkes made her transition peacefully of natural causes at her home on Wednesday, November 20, 2013. A native of El Dorado, Arkansas, Thelma was the twelfth child born to Lucy and Robert Benson. She graduated from Smackover Training High School in Arkansas. In 1944 she relocated to Berkeley, California and married her late husband, Rev. L. Leander Wilkes. The couple remained married for 61 years. To this union, five children were born, Deidre Gail, Lucy Naomi, Leonard Bruce, Jamaal Keith and Leo Benson. Two children, Leonard Bruce and Lucy Naomi preceded her in death.

Thelma furthered her education in northern California before relocating to Ventura, California in 1959. She became a congregant at Olivet Baptist Church where she served as First Lady for ten years, was an active member of the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Church Women United. She also enjoyed volunteering with numerous community organizations. In 1965, Thelma was honored as “Mother of the Year” for Ventura County.

In 1969, her family moved to Santa Barbara, California where she served as First Lady of Second Baptist Church for 35 years and thereafter remained active as a church Mother and with the Women’s Ministry. Thelma was employed for 25 years at the University of California at Santa Barbara working in accounting, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), and financial aid until her retirement in 1991. She believed working with students was a wonderful experience and used that opportunity to encourage young adults to finish their education and give back to their community. She enjoyed traveling within the United States and abroad, tending to her rose and vegetable gardens and pursuing her deep interest in people and the world around her.

Devoted to her family, Thelma is survived by her children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, sister, Lucille Riggins, and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

The viewing for the community will be held on Friday, November 29, 2013 from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. at Welch-Ryce-Haider, 15 East Sola Street, Santa Barbara, 93101. Memories and condolences may be directed to Welch-Ryce-Haider’s address or by

visiting <http://www.wrhsb.com>. Services and internment will be private.

The family is most thankful for your love and support during this difficult time.

# Events

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**NOV** **Viewing** 09:00AM - 04:00PM

**29**

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Welch-Ryce-Haider - Downtown

15 E. Sola St., Santa Barbara, CA, US, 93101

# Comments

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“ Thelma was a beautiful, wonderful, caring lady. I was always so honored to take her to the UCSB affairs where everyone was so happy to see her. She was also such a cheerful person at CURVES in the early morning. I will be among the many who will be missing her greatly, but also feel grateful for having had to chance to know her.  
Bev Torres

**Bev Torres** - December 01, 2013 at 12:34 PM

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“ Mrs. Wilkes was a very special lady. I consider myself so lucky to have met her. She will be missed. My sympathy to the whole family.  
Helen Black

**Helen Black** - November 30, 2013 at 05:47 PM

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“ I thoroughly enjoyed Mrs. Wilkes, she always made you feel like you were special and her only focus at the time of meeting. She will be missed. This photo captures her spirit.  
Linda Ryles



**Linda Ryles** - November 29, 2013 at 10:47 PM

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“ As a child I had the privilege of being one of Mrs. Wilkes Sunday School students at Second Baptist Church and as such was a recipient of many of her wonderful hugs and kisses. I was blessed to have her be a part of my life from childhood until I graduated from San Marcos High School in 1982. She will be greatly missed. My condolences to her sister and children



**Bridget Garrett Wright** - November 29, 2013 at 08:50 PM

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“ Thelma was a wonderful, caring person, as was Leander, so its no surprise that together they produced a great family. You can't do better than that! Our whole family sends condolences to the Wilkes family.

Bob & Barbara Swanson, Terri, Scott & Wendy

**Bob Swanson** - November 28, 2013 at 02:18 PM

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“ Mrs. Wilkes was a Ventura treasure when I was in high school with Deirdre and Lucy. I loved to see her at The Broadway where her elegance and kindness were rewards for simply walking by. When I wrote her after Lucy's death, her note to me was pure kindness. My sincerest condolences to Deirdre, Jamal, Leo and their families.

Jean Getchell  
Venrura

**Jean Getchell** - November 26, 2013 at 12:57 PM

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“ Thelma, I can't believe you are gone. Thelma was on a small, top list of the most wonderful people I have ever known in my life. She gave me the most important advise that taught me so much about life, family and children. She was a Beautiful, very special shining light and I just adored her. I feel blessed to have had her as such a dear friend. We, my husband and I are shocked at her passing. We send our love to her beautiful family.

Sharon and Jack Trigueiro

Sharon Trigueiro - November 26, 2013 at 11:56 AM

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“ I was a student at UCSB in the late 1970's. I was receiving financial aid and the process was not an easy one to navigate through. Not everyone you came into contact with during this process was kind or helpful. One could be made to feel as if we were "lesser than" because we needed the financial assistance. This could not have been farther from the truth once I met Mrs. Wilkes. I still have the memory of sitting in her office & feeling like everything was going to be O.K. Her kindness, professionalism and caring has stayed with me until this day. Know that she touched many lives and her memory has left a spot in my heart. What a special woman she was. My thoughts and sympathy are with your family.

Susan - November 26, 2013 at 11:30 AM

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“ Linda Richardson sent a virtual gift in memory of Mrs. Thelma Wilkes



Linda Richardson - November 26, 2013 at 10:35 AM



“ This angle is from my mother the late Rosemary Brown. In memory for Mrs. Wilkes.

Linda Richardson - November 26, 2013 at 10:36 AM

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“ Linda Richardson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Thelma Wilkes



**Linda Richardson** - November 26, 2013 at 10:34 AM



“ As a child I had the privilege of being one of Mrs. Wilkes Sunday School students at Second Baptist Church and as such was a recipient of many of her wonderful hugs and kisses. I was blessed to have her be a part of my life from childhood until I graduated from San Marcos High School in 1982. She will be greatly missed. My condolences to her sister and children.

**Bridget Garrett Wright** - November 29, 2013 at 08:48 PM