

Gladys Thornton Brown

January 8, 1939 - December 20, 2025

Gladys was born on January 15, 1939, in Barnesville, Georgia, to her cherished parents, the late Mary Ruth Miller and the late Albert James Thornton. From the tender age of eight, she discovered her calling. Her hands learned the language of love through cooking, and she spoke it fluently for the rest of her life.

She later met and married the late Lee E. Brown, a proud United States Air Force serviceman who faithfully served for 23 years. Together they raised their children, traveled the world, and built a life rooted in commitment and devotion. After Lee's retirement, they settled in Orlando, Florida, in 1974, where Gladys' legacy would continue to grow.

Her faith was her foundation. She became a devoted member and ward leader of Tildenville Missionary Baptist Church, lifting her voice joyfully in the choir, and made weekly visits to the sick and shut-in. Later, under the leadership of Pastor Timothy Ford, she was a founding member of New Direction Community Church of Faith, where she was lovingly known as one of the mothers of the church-guiding, praying, and nurturing all who crossed her path.

To us, she was more than a mother. She was refuge and reassurance. A prayer warrior who stood in the gap. A counselor whose words were honest,

timely, and rooted in truth-sometimes hard to hear, but always given in love.

Her door was never closed. She would offer the homeless person down the street a place to stay. Her table, her fridge, and her deep freezer were never empty. She fed bodies with her food and souls with her wisdom. Ministering with her words flowed easily, often followed by laughter-her way of reminding us that faith and joy could coexist.

Our mother's kitchen was her sanctuary. It was where fellowship happened, burdens were lifted, and traditions were born. Her red velvet cakes became legend, and her Macaroni and Cheese was the cheesiest. Her meals brought people together, and her laughter filled every space she entered. Her humor was bold, her presence unforgettable, and her trust in God unwavering through every season. She endured profound loss, yet continued to love deeply. She faced sorrow, yet served faithfully. She knew pain, yet gave freely. And through it all, she believed.

Today, while our hearts ache, we find peace in knowing she has heard the words she lived for: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Gladys was preceded in death by her beloved siblings Sammy Thornton, Johnny Thornton, and Louise Matthews; her treasured sons Robert Lee Brown and Duane Anthony Brown; and her cherished grandchildren Tanesha Brown Murray and Virgillo "Gilly" Vargas.

She leaves to cherish her memory, her children Jerome T. Brown, Veronica Brown Chandler, Christopher Lloyd Brown (Vivian), Vanesha Brown (Eric); her sister, Annie Ruth Johnson; and her favorite daughter-in law, Michelle Brown.

Her legacy continues through her grandchildren: Angelo Brooks, Lee Hughley,

Porsha Carter, Durell Brown, Jerrad Matthews, Ashley Brown Watkins, Precious Brown Collins, Christopher Lloyd Brown II, Todd Chandler II, Marcus Brown, Micah Brown, Najjah Casellas, Eric Peterson II, and Emari Peterson. She is also survived by 20 great-grandchildren, one great-great-grandchild, several step-grandchildren and godchildren, whom she loved as her own, a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and very, very dear friends, each lovingly claimed as family.

We will carry her love forward. Pray with conviction. Laugh freely like she would have. Serve faithfully. And in doing so, we will keep her spirit alive-now and forever.

Cemetery Details

Oakland-Tildenville Cemetery

16667 W Colonial Drive
Oakland, FL 34760

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 9. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Zanders Memorial Chapel
232 W. Michael Gladden Blvd.
Apopka, FL 32703
(407) 886-3388

Service

JAN 10. 1:15 PM (ET)

Winter Garden Primitive Baptist Church
943 W. Story Rd.
Winter Garden , FL 34787

Tribute Wall

MM

“ *Mary D Morss lit a candle in memory of Gladys Thornton Brown*



Mary D Morss - January 10 at 04:12 PM

RT

“ *Rob & T purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



Rob & T - January 09 at 04:45 PM

DS

“ *David and Dorothy Sherman purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



David and Dorothy Sherman - January 09 at 01:55 PM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



January 09 at 04:37 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



January 08 at 09:40 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



January 08 at 07:00 PM



“ *Christella & Jerrad Matthews purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



Christella & Jerrad Matthews - January 08 at 11:04 AM



“ *Enduring Grace was purchased for the family of Gladys Thornton Brown.*



January 08 at 09:19 AM

RF

“ Rickey & Darlene Dumas of Minneola FL. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Gladys Thornton Brown.


Rickey & Darlene Dumas of Minneola FL. - January 08 at 09:19 AM

DB

“ I don't even know where to begin. From the moment we met, love came naturally effortless, real. You were truly my girl. Those long nights on the phone, talking for hours about everything and nothing, meant more to me than you'll ever know. I loved being in the house with you, watching you cook, feeling at peace just being near you. You never judged me, never threw my past in my face. You loved me as I was, and that love was rare and beautiful. Having you in my life and in Gillies's life was an honor I'll carry forever. You are deeply loved, and you will always be missed.

Denise Brown - January 01 at 10:49 AM

RT

“ Auntie my girl!!! You were such a loving woman feisty lol but very loving caring and nurturing. Heaven truly gained someone special. Sleep in peace baby and kiss Mrs. Nettie and Daddy Roma for me! I love you always 

Ronerica "Poopie" Thornton - December 30, 2025 at 12:03 PM

PS

“ Hey Mama! There are no words to explain what you meant to me and how you were truly a blessing to my life. You kept me centered and grounded and always led me back to the Lord. If I ever was upset or sad or needed to cry you were always just a phone call away or a few minutes drive. All the playing we used to do, the funny times and even the playing we used to do! Like you said “boy we had a good time”! The only thing that keeps from falling apart is knowing that you are with the Lord and you are having another good time with no arthritis pain and able to move freely again. Thank you for your guidance, love and spirit. There so much more I can say but know that I love you Darlin Sweet and I’m Still not going to say goodbye but I’ll say I’ll see you later! Thank you for always believing in me and always being positive. Like you always taught me Always positive and nothing negative. It still hurts to know that you are gone physically and I will cherish all the 41 years, 4 months and 19 days we had together years we had together! I love you mama!!!

Papa Smurf - December 30, 2025 at 09:37 AM

CM

Your life was a blessing to me and my family...,especially Jerrad as you lovingly cared for him when I was working. God stepped in and sen us an Angel...Rest in Peace sweet lady...you have earned your reward. You will be missed !
Christella Matthews

Christella Matthews - January 05 at 01:24 PM

TI

“ Mama, thank you for raising me and I will cherish all the memories growing up. Not playing when it’s raining outside, being your helping hand for thanksgiving, coming to you for advice. God has you home so thank you for all that you did for us here.

Todd Chandler II - December 29, 2025 at 07:38 PM

LH

“ Momma I miss u so much this is really hard for me. You are the woman in my life. That I could always look up to. You always have the best advice, even though I always didn't listen to it you were my rock, and my stronghold, my peace. I will never forget you. I love you until we meet again. 🌹🌹🌹🌹

Lee Hughley - December 29, 2025 at 10:18 AM



“ Oh mama! Missing you is understatement!



Vee Elena - December 25, 2025 at 09:29 AM

KD

“ Aunt Gladys will truly be missed (my Sweet Pea)

Kimberly Dubose - December 24, 2025 at 07:10 PM

MS

“ MONICA DENISE SCOTT lit a candle in memory of Gladys Thornton Brown



MONICA DENISE SCOTT - December 24, 2025 at 09:48 AM