Bernice Dunham Ellis

Bernice Dunham Ellis, of Westlake, was called home on Dec. 26, 2015.

She was born Feb. 5, 1931, in Beaumont, Texas. Her family returned to Marcabel Settlement near DeQuincy a few years later. Upon graduating from DeQuincy High School, Bernice moved with her mom and a younger brother to Lake Charles. She worked in several retail positions before she became a switchboard operator at the Cities Service Refinery on the graveyard shift. She fondly recounted the wonderful co-workers she met during her work there. Bernice attended Bethel Baptist Church, where she met her late husband of 61 years, Rollin Milton Ellis, Jr. They married on Feb. 27, 1954, following a courtship of 90 days. It was love at first sight. As a wife and mother of three, Bernice enjoyed working both in and out of the home. She retired from the Calcasieu Parish School System after working as a special education para-professional and a general school aide. Bernice worked with students and teachers at Western Heights Elementary and Frasch Elementary. She also loved to do yard work, where she kept a large flower garden. She shared her love for being outdoors and of growing flowers with her family. Bernice enjoyed the many friendships she made over the years through her church, work places and school activities with her daughters. She served the American Heart Association as a neighborhood campaign representative. At the age of 79, Bernice successfully underwent brain tumor surgery at MD Anderson and returned home without any complications.

Bernice and Rollin reared their three daughters in Westlake: Teresa Chance (Doug), Lori Manuel (Russ) and Lynette Dewey (Steve).

Bernice was preceded in death by her husband, Rollin, June 23, of this year; her parents, Leslie and Octavia Langley Dunham of Marcabel Settlement; one brother, George W. Dunham of Westlake; four sisters, Louise Glass of Walker, Lessie Waldron of Baton Rouge, Lucille Marcabel of Westlake, and Velma Durham of Bedford, Texas. A fifth sister, Vernice, died at the age of two.

Bernice is survived by three daughters; one granddaughter, Rachael Chance of New Orleans; five grandsons, Derek and Doug Peterson, both of Westlake, Daniel Peterson (Brooke) of Lake Charles, Joey Clark (Lexee) of Moss Bluff, Nicholas Ackel of Lafayette; six great-grandchildren; one brother, Jimmy Dunham (Vera) of Denham Springs; and a host of extended family living from Texas to Georgia and inbetween.

The funeral arrangements will be directed by Hixson Funeral Home in Westlake followed by interment in the Magnolia Cemetery. Visitation will be Wednesday, Dec. 30, 2015, 6–9 p.m. The memorial service will be in the chapel, Thursday, Dec. 31, 2015, 10 a.m. The chapel will open at 8 a.m.