



## Mrs. Joan Evans Harbin

December 27, 1930 - March 24, 2026

Joan Evans Harbin will be remembered first and foremost as unconventional. She was not a follower—she was a doer. Joan lived life on her own terms, guided by curiosity, creativity, and a deep love for people, family, and community.

In her younger years, Joan was active in many of the ladies' civic and philanthropic organizations in Scottsboro. These groups focused on beautifying the town and raising funds for meaningful causes, and Joan contributed enthusiastically to their efforts. She also enjoyed playing bridge and welcoming friends and students into her beloved refurbished hundred-year-old cabin, where she taught art lessons. The cabin itself was one of her treasures; she loved telling the history of the families who had built it and lived there before her.

Art was at the very center of Joan's life. She painted the faces of her grandchildren, the people she met during her many travels around the world, and even found beauty in everyday objects, giving them life on canvas. It would be hard to say whether she loved painting more or traveling with her beloved husband, Buddy. Together they explored countless places, meeting people of many nationalities and forming friendships wherever they went.

Joan loved her home deeply and filled it with furniture and objects collected

during those travels. Trends and constant redecorating never interested her much—there were simply too many new places to see and things to learn.

Her heart was especially drawn to her ancestral home of Ireland. After tracing her family roots, Joan and Buddy discovered extended family there and eventually planted roots of their own in the small village of Ballyduff. They were welcomed warmly and soon became cherished members of the community. Local farmers driving their cattle down the road often wore Harbin Motor Company hats, a small but meaningful sign of friendship between the Harbin's and their Irish neighbors.

Faith was also an important part of Joan's life. When the Harbin family first arrived in Scottsboro, they were the town's first Catholic family and traveled to Guntersville to attend Mass. As more Catholic families settled in Scottsboro, a church community began to grow. When the Stations of the Cross were acquired from another location in damaged condition, Joan and her friend Inez Talley painstakingly restored and repainted each one to its original beauty. Joan loved that church and the community it created.

In February 1979, after the tragic loss of her eight-year-old grandson Russ, Joan turned her grief into determined action. Rather than withdrawing, she traveled across Alabama speaking to organizations about the state's liberal "good time" law for prisoners. For fifteen months she lobbied members of the Alabama Senate and House of Representatives to change the law. Her crusade was successful when legislation—known for Joan Harbin's measure—passed, barring Class A felons from earning sentence reductions for good behavior. When the bill passed, both legislative chambers acknowledged Joan's work with applause on the floor. Through her courage and persistence, she helped save lives—whether those lives ever knew her name or not.

Joan also had a tender heart for those who simply needed companionship.

Before she herself became a resident at Southern Estates or Highlands Rehabilitation, she was a regular visitor there. She would walk the halls, stopping to talk with anyone willing to listen. Conversation was her gift, and she shared it generously.

Family was another great joy in Joan's life. She loved her children dearly, but many would say her grandchildren and great-grandchildren held a particularly special place in her heart. She and Buddy became grandparents early in life and had the energy to match. Their first grandchild, Russ, spent many Friday nights on a cot beside their bed. Soon came Erin—her “favorite queen”—followed by Will, Win, Lee, and Tanner. For years the five grandchildren spent Saturdays with their grandparents from 10:00am sharp until 4:00pm sharp, when they prepared for church at 5:00. On Wednesdays Buddy picked them up from school while Joan waited with fruit cups ready in the car—she always wanted them to be healthy. In later years, the great-grandchildren brought her immense joy, and she loved hearing about each of their accomplishments.

Joan was born and raised in Mobile, Alabama. Growing up there was full of adventure. She participated in Mardi Gras parades, attended the Visitation Academy, and graduated from Murphy High School. Summers were spent across the bay in Point Clear with her three siblings and countless cousins, creating memories that lasted a lifetime.

Joan later attended the University of Alabama, where she met the love of her life, Buddy Harbin, in the late 1940s. Their partnership would carry them through decades of travel, family life, community involvement, and shared adventure.

When Joan first visited Scottsboro with Buddy to meet his parents, she joked that she felt as if she had entered a foreign country. The tall mountains,

expansive farms, and lush forests were far different from the coastal landscape of her hometown. Yet that place soon became home, and Joan became one of the town's most colorful and memorable residents.

Joan adored those near and far, and she cherished her many friendships. She lived boldly, spoke freely, painted passionately, traveled widely, and loved deeply. Her life touched countless people—through art, advocacy, faith, conversation, and family.

She leaves behind a legacy of creativity, courage, and love that will live on in the many lives she influenced and the many hearts that remember her.

Joan passed away peacefully at the age of 95 on March 24, 2026. She was born on December 27, 1930 in Mobile, Alabama. She is preceded in death by her husband, Buddy Harbin; her grandson, Russ Bradford, her parents Annie and Billy Evans; and siblings Anne Evans Stalcup and William (Bubba) Evans.

Joan is survived by her children Jim and Laura Payne, Hoyt and Marionna Harbin; her grandchildren: Andre and Erin Wright, Will Bradford, Win and Natalie Harbin, Lee and Jessica Bradford, Tanner and Lauren Harbin; her great grandchildren: Nora Harbin, Audrey Wright, E Harbin, Tanner Harbin, Ava Harbin, Claire Wright, Tucker Bradford, Grace Harbin and Tate Bradford. As well as her sister Koochie Quinlivan and sister in law Bonnie Weeks. And a host of nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 12 p.m. Friday, March 27, 2026 at St Jude Catholic Church in Scottsboro. Father Tom Woods will officiate. The family will receive friends on Friday at the church beginning at 10 a.m. Burial will be in Cedar Hill Cemetery.

Arrangements Entrusted to Scottsboro Funeral Home.



# Cemetery Details

## Cedar Hill Cemetery

210 South Cedar Hill Drive  
Scottsboro, AL 35768  
(256) 609-8166

# Previous Events

## Receive Friends

MAR 27. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Jude Catholic Church  
17205 AL HWY 35  
Scottsboro, AL 35768

## Funeral Service

MAR 27. 12:00 PM (CT)

St. Jude Catholic Church  
17205 AL HWY 35  
Scottsboro, AL 35768

# Tribute Wall

KE

“ *Ken, Kaci, Logan, Jett, & Easton purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Mrs. Joan Evans Harbin.*



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**Ken, Kaci, Logan, Jett, & Easton** - March 26 at 12:48 PM

AS

“ *Going to miss you aunt Joan. Love Ashley*

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**Ashley Stalcup** - March 26 at 11:05 AM