



Melissa Jester

December 4, 2025

Melissa Jester, age 57, went to be with the Lord on December 4, 2025. She was a native of Chincoteague and a resident of Norfolk, VA. Melissa graduated from Chincoteague High School Class of 1986, graduated from Lynchburg College, and was employed at Fellini's Restaurant for 30 years.

Melissa was predeceased by her parents, Bonnie and Wayne Jester; grandparents, Hilda and Rooker Farlow, Opal and Lyle Jester. Melissa is survived by her fiancé and the love of her life for over seventeen years, Bart Gaskins; sister, Beverly Jester; sister-in-law, Terry Wilson-Jester; aunt, Barbara Jester; six cousins, Melinda, Karl, Michelle, Denise, Amanda, and Faith Ann. Many devoted and loving family and friends also survive her.

Melissa brought joy and peace to countless people with her contagious smile, free spirit, and extraordinary sense of humor. She displayed sincere, unselfish love and devotion to her family and friends from Chincoteague to Norfolk. From her childhood, Melissa developed a deep love of wild horses on the Eastern Shore, and that love grew throughout adulthood. She also enjoyed all the activities in both of her favorite places, including going to the beach, attending festivals, parades, and indulging in the area's cuisine. She cherished her travels with Bart, family, and friends, making lasting impressions on those she met.

The family will receive friends in Loving Funeral Home on Saturday, December 13, 2025, from 1-3 pm to celebrate her life. An additional celebration, to be scheduled, will take place in Chincoteague, VA.

Contributions may be made at <https://www.featherfund.net>, a nonprofit organization that assists deserving children in purchasing Chincoteague Ponies. This teaches children life lessons, including responsibility, good care, love, and ethics, through raising foals.

Previous Events

A Visitation and Celebration of Her Life Service

DEC **13**. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Loving Funeral Home Churchland Chapel
3225 Academy Ave
Portsmouth, VA 23703

Tribute Wall

CM

“ Anyone who knew Melissa,
knew she had a kind heart.
Anytime you saw her with Bart
She always had such a BIG Smile!!!
You could see the Love they had
For One Another...
True "Soul Mates"

*I am saddened
To know
She was taken away from this world too soon...
But will be in our hearts forever ..*

*Much Love & Prayers
Go out to
Bart,
Her Family & Friends
At this time ...*

Charles Masek

charles Masek - December 13, 2025 at 07:07 PM

JJ

“ Melissa was just our most favorite server in the world! She knew our drink order, she knew we liked to linger over our cocktail, and she laughed with us when we ordered something other than our “usual”. She always stopped by to say hello even if we were being taken care of by someone else. We searched her out every time we visited Fellini’s. We are very sad. We will miss her tremendously because she always made our day better. We never imagined a day that we would not see her.

Joyce Jurkowski - December 13, 2025 at 05:46 PM

MH

“ Mickey Hollomon lit a candle in memory of
Melissa Jester



Mickey Hollomon - December 13, 2025 at 09:46 AM

DC

“ I am at a loss for words finding out about Melissa. We went to high school together, I'd been friends with her for over 40 years. Every time she came back to Chincoteague, I'd try my best to hang out with her and Bart. This just breaks my heart. Melissa was such a wonderful, exuberant person, and she would light up every room she went into. I'm not a religious person, but my thoughts and prayers go out to Bart and Beverly; I know that anyone who knew her feels the same way: a profound feeling of loss. She made the world a better place.

Daryl

Daryl Chrisman - December 09, 2025 at 06:04 PM

MA

“ *Melissa was a dear friend and neighbor for so many years, and her presence was one of the bright part of my life. We shared countless joyful moments together from festivals, to games (Tides, Admirals, and cheering for her beloved Steelers), movies, parades, concerts —each one filled with her laughter, her warmth, and the kind of loving friendship that made every experience feel special. She was full of life, passion, and poetry, and her fun-loving spirit touched everyone fortunate enough to know her. I will miss her more than words can say. My heart goes out to Beverly, Bart, her family, and to all those who loved her. You are in my thoughts. May her beautiful energy continue to live on in the memories we all carry and the love she left behind.*

Martin - December 08, 2025 at 07:29 PM

SL

“ *Our hearts are broken over the sudden passing of Melissa. She was such a special lady. We will miss our chats and laughs with her at Fellini's. We will miss her beautiful smile and love she had for everyone. God has a special angel now. Sherry & Robert*

Sherry Lankford - December 08, 2025 at 04:34 AM

LK

“ *Dear Bev you are in my thoughts and prayers! You and Melissa have the best sister bond that two sisters good have. Cherish all your memories.*

Your cousin,

Lisa Rantz Kelly

Lisa Kelly - December 07, 2025 at 07:30 PM

KR

“ We are broken-hearted to hear the news of Melissa’s unexpected passing on December 4th.

I first met Melissa 34 years ago at Il Porto, and our paths crossed again in 1994 when I was graduating college. From the very beginning, Melissa was someone who lived fully in the moment and knew how to embrace the joy of life.

Over the years, I’ve collected countless fond memories of her—moments filled with laughter, warmth, and her unmistakable spirit. Melissa even played a special role in my life by introducing me to my husband, a gift for which I will always be grateful.

Melissa was more than a friend; she was a reminder of how beautiful life can be when lived with openness and joy. Her absence leaves a deep void, and we will miss her dearly.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Bart, her family, and her close friends. We have truly lost a remarkable person, one who brought light and happiness to everyone fortunate enough to know her.

Kristen and John Ruth

Kristen L. Ruth - December 07, 2025 at 07:20 PM

EH

“ I am Evan Hamilton, and I was introduced to Melissa and Bart through my close friends, Terry and Beverly. I was deeply captivated by Melissa's vibrant spirit and radiant aura, and over time, I became an integral part of their family. For the past four decades, I have consistently been treated as a cherished family member. My fondest memories of Melissa involve numerous celebrations shared with her, Beverly, Terry, and Bart. I distinctly recall one Christmas Eve at Terry and Beverly's residence, where Christmas music was playing via Alexa. Melissa requested a song, the title of which escapes me at present. Melissa then took my hand and suggested we dance, and we proceeded to engage in playful dancing, much to the amusement of Terry and Bart. I can imagine that now that she is dancing upon the clouds. I will forever cherish the times spent with Melissa and her smile. I love you and will always miss you.

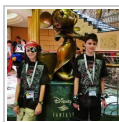


Evan Hamilton - December 07, 2025 at 03:45 PM

LB

“ My name is Laurie Ballard-Wiseman. I was the manager of IL Porto Restaurant for years. I am so heartbroken to hear of her passing! I want to send my condolences to her family, Bart and other close friends!

Laurie Ballard-wiseman - December 07, 2025 at 09:35 AM



I remember Melissa working at Il Porto. Thank you for that memory.

Jennifer Jordan - December 12, 2025 at 10:01 PM

SA

“ I grew up with Melissa, from kindergarten to graduation. She was a shining star and had an amazing smile. Her heart was as big as her personality. She will truly be missed. Rest in God's arms, hug the other members of our class. Until we meet again Rest in peace

Sheri Allen - December 06, 2025 at 07:15 PM



“ Melissa was funny and I will miss that 1000 watt smile.

Cindy Dennis - December 06, 2025 at 05:00 PM

VW

“ Dear Melissa I wish we had met but I did not know you, and so unfortunately I cannot share a memory. I do know how treasured you are among your family and dear friends, and to them I send my deepest sympathy. I know how hard it is to lose a loved one. I bid you peace now and heavenly rest in eternity. Your light still shines brightly among those you touched in life.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" Psalm 27

Victoria Weiskopf

Victoria Weiskopf - December 06, 2025 at 03:10 PM

SS

“ I met Melissa when I was introduced to her by Wade Davis. I had just purchased Chuck’s Truck from Rhonda after moving to the island and needing a new vehicle.

So Wade and Melissa are having a great reunion and that’s how I’m moving through the loss, knowing she was greeted with open arms. Melissa was always welcoming whenever I was out and about. I’m just so sad for us all, especially Bart ... I am widowed and I know the magnitude of this loss he is enduring. Please those who are close to him, keep a close eye on him and keep checking. Once services are done, he has a long period ahead where he’s going to need everyone around him to lift him up and show him he compassion and grace he’s going to need to start to move forward. Blessing and prayers to you all. She touched SO MANY.

Sue Steward - December 06, 2025 at 02:49 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Pictures of Melissa



William Watson Birch - December 06, 2025 at 02:39 PM



“ When my family moved from Ridge Road to Highland Park on Chincoteague Island, Virginia in 1979, when I was 11 years old, I became quick friends with Melissa Jester, Rodney Merritt, Laura Jones and others in the neighborhood--such a great place to grow up. Rarely a day went by that we were not all hanging out together, playing games, riding bikes and then mopeds, staying out late in the Summer until our parents called us home. Year after year, as we were growing up together and going to school together, there was a bond of friendship that could not be broken.

Even into adulthood, that bond was still unbroken, and Melissa was one of those people who intentionally kept those bonds of friendship strong. I don't believe she ever met a stranger. All were welcome in her world. She loved life, she loved people, and she always made others feel welcomed, special, and loved. Whether she was at work, or at play, she embraced life to the fullest. She was a rare and bright jewel in a sometimes-dark and brooding world.

Being taken from us so abruptly has been difficult to process--a light snuffed out in the world far too soon, much too quickly, leaving us with no opportunity for closure, to say goodbye, to tell her how much she meant to each one of us whose lives she touched immensely. Now we must whisper our own private goodbyes, hoping somehow that God will let her hear them, so that she knows just how much she means to us and how grateful we all are for her light in this dark world and her love toward us all in this life.

Thank you, Melissa, for making us all feel so very welcomed and loved.

William Watson Birch - December 06, 2025 at 02:38 PM