



Dr. Elaine Stiller

October 17, 1934 - March 21, 2026

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our beloved family member, Dr. Elaine Stiller. Born on October 17, 1934, to Carl Mason Sells and Eula Ludwick Sells, Dr. Stiller completed her earthly journey on March 21, 2026. Her education began in Rowan County, where she graduated early from Boyden High School (now Salisbury), attained her undergraduate degree from Lenoir Rhyne University, and later earned her Masters and Doctorate in Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dr. Stiller was a strong, educated, and independent woman—a lifelong educator dedicated to nurturing others. She began her professional career as a First-Grade Teacher in Lexington, North Carolina. Following the tragic loss of her father in a truck accident, she returned to Rowan County in 1966 and became the main provider for her family.

Her career in the Rowan County School System progressed rapidly, starting as a teacher and advancing to County Teaching Supervisor, Assistant Principal, and eventually Principal of North Rowan Elementary School. Dr. Stiller played a pivotal role in designing, opening, and leading the elementary school on Charles Street, Spencer. She introduced the first open classroom school in the county, collaborating closely with teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and maintenance staff. Dr. Stiller understood the importance of building organizations and ideas from the ground up, embodying the belief that "people support what they help create."

Dr. Stiller contributed to her community in numerous ways, including through

her involvement with Delta Kappa Gamma Sorority, organizing, starting, and running Franklin Pool, serving as Treasurer for the Rowan Democratic Party, and participating in the North Carolina Association of Educators. She was a member of the Salisbury City Planning Board and Bethel Lutheran Church, where she held roles as Council Member, Treasurer, and Representative to the North Carolina Lutheran Synod. She was active in the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and authored the History of Bethel Lutheran Church. Additionally, she was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star and supported the Franklin-Ellis Lions Club.

Dr. Stiller is survived by her son Todd Stiller, grandson Casey Stiller, and granddaughter Carly Stiller. She is also remembered by family members Loretta Ludwick, Trahey Ludwick, Brant Ludwick, and Harold Poole Jr. Cherished for her kindness, strength, and unwavering support, Dr. Stiller touched countless lives. Her memory endures in the stories shared and the love that surrounds her family and friends. We honor her legacy and celebrate a life well-lived, forever holding her in our hearts.

A Memorial Service will be held on Saturday, March 28, at 2:00 PM at Bethel Lutheran Church, 355 East Ridge Road, Salisbury. The service will be conducted by Synod Authorized Minister Dr. Peggy Terhune. A Celebration of Life will follow immediately in the church Fellowship Hall.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the Stiller family. Online condolences may be made at www.summersettfuneralhome.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR **28**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Bethel Lutheran Church
355 E Ridge Rd
Salisbury, NC 28144-9404
(704) 636-0331

Tribute Wall

DP

“ *The Salisbury Branch of the American Association of University Women celebrates the life of our esteemed and devoted member, Dr. Elaine Stiller.*

For 43 years, Dr. Stiller was a steadfast pillar of our branch, exemplifying the mission of advancing equity for women and girls through education, advocacy, and leadership. Her legacy of service is both remarkable and enduring. She served with distinction as Branch President from 1987 to 1989, and her thoughtful leadership helped guide the organization during a period of meaningful growth and impact.

Dr. Stiller’s commitment extended far beyond a single role. She generously shared her time and talents as Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Public Policy Chair, and By-Laws Chair, each position reflecting her diligence, intellect, and deep belief in the work of AAUW. Her voice helped shape our policies, her words kept our members informed and connected, and her stewardship ensured the strength and sustainability of our branch.

More than her titles, Dr. Stiller will be remembered for her unwavering dedication, her quiet strength, and her enduring belief in the power of collective action to create change. She inspired those around her through both her service and her spirit.

We honor her life, her leadership, and her lasting contributions. She will be deeply missed and forever remembered by the Salisbury Branch of AAUW and all who had the privilege to serve alongside her.

DaTarvia Parrish - March 26 at 06:32 PM

EH

“ Dr. Stiller was an active member of the Salisbury Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) for 43 years, sharing her talents and insights as President, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor, Public Policy chair and By-Laws chair. She championed education and equality for women and girls. It was an honor to have known her.

Eileen Hanson-Kelly - March 26 at 02:36 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Dr. Elaine Stiller.



March 24 at 10:57 AM