Ethel Mae Stewart, born Ethel Mae MacNeil on March 26, 1928, passed away peacefully of natural causes on July 24, 2012 near her home in Newburyport, MA.

Ethel grew up in Saugus, Ma. daughter of Constance Ober MacNeil and George MacNeil. She was one of five children. She graduated Essex County Agricultural School in 1946. Ethel had both a passion and a natural talent for music. She first gained notoriety as a church singer with a much sought after soprano voice that brought new vibrancy and meaning to the selected music. One of her favorite pieces to perform was a musical adaptation of Joyce Kilmer’s poem “Trees”.

During her professional career, Ethel was known for taking on the tough jobs. She did this with a compassionate heart. She once had the task of pre-interviewing potential applicants for security jobs. She advised many applicants of the need for honesty and straight forwardness. She was rewarded later in life when she was approached by a man she had advised, and he told her just how much she had changed his life for the better.

As the mother of Elizabeth, and Marilyn, she strived to emulate the wisdom, knowledge, and love she received from her own mother. One way she did this was to teach her daughters how to bake bread. This showed them how to find personal meaning in work and how to make the most of what they had on hand.

Between singing, working, and raising two children, Ethel found time to volunteer. Among her many volunteer activities, she coordinated and compiled several cookbooks for, among others, the Riverside Memorial Church and the Citizens League for Adult Special Services. In this way, Ethel not only brought communities together, but also helped to raise money for much needed services. This spirit of community and volunteerism drove her work decisions throughout her life. This included her work at Anna Jacques Hospital, C.L.A.S.S., Inc., Elder Services of Merrimack Valley, the Newburyport City Auditors Office, the American Red Cross, and especially The Pettingill House, where she will always be remembered for bringing smiles, love, and laughter to people – even during tough times. She is also being remembered by the Newburyport Affordable Housing Corp. They have approved a resolution naming 15 ½ Titcomb St. the “Ethel Mae Stewart House”.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Marilyn Fairbanks

She is survived by her daughter Elizabeth Carrigan of Kittery, ME, and her grandchildren Lana Fairbanks of Amesbury, MA, Gabriel Balkus of Portsmouth, NH, Noah McCormick of Portland, ME, Forreste McCormick of Gorham, ME, Saoirse Carrigan of Kittery, ME.

Private services will be held. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in her honor to The Pettengill House P.O. Box 5551, 13 Lafayette Road, Salisbury, MA 01952 [www.pettengillhouse.org](http://www.pettengillhouse.org/)