



Eleanor Dunn Totz

September 10, 1940 - June 18, 2026

Eleanor (Ellie) Dunn Totz passed away on June 18, 2026, in Houston, Texas. She was the beloved wife of Jon David Totz, weeks shy of 63 years of marriage; loving mother of Andrew (Alberta) Totz and Kenneth (Margaret) Totz; adoring grandmother of Samuel (Kristen), Rachael, Caroline, Jacob and Ella Totz; great-grandmother to Luke Totz; and dear sister of the late Miriam (Elliott) Lyon.

To the delight of her parents, the late Milton and Libby Dunn Hertzmark, Ellie was born September 10, 1940, in Washington, D.C. Legend has it, she entered the world giving the OBGYN the finger. Her mother taught her to read at age four, labeling her precocious. Both foreshadowed her personality.

Ellie's first love was her city, Washington, D.C. Its vibrancy defined her childhood, as did her relationships with her parents. Ellie was a true original in mind and spirit—a product of her closeness to her father, a proud feminist and her best friend, and her mother, whose tenacity and activism inspired her love of politics and freed her to think beyond conventions.

She took great pride in attending Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, where she majored in history, sociology, and psychology. In her junior year, she transferred to American University, returning home to study art and to cast her first vote in a presidential election.

When John F. Kennedy won, Washington rocked with young lawyers wanting in on the celebration. Among them was the love of her life, Jon David Totz, from Gonzales, Texas. From the moment he picked her up for her 204th blind date at 5814 Kanawha Street, she knew he was it. To this day, Ellie's willingness to settle down in Houston is among the biggest testaments of her love for Jon. Washington would always be her city, but Jon was her home.

Ellie's colorful personality translated into her love of the arts. Her artistry was an expression of her heart, a sharing of how she saw the world, which inspired others to find their color and joy in life.

Ellie was a painter, weaver, writer, and chef. She received a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Houston and later authored a fiction book. Forever insatiable for knowledge, she went on to study with mentors in painting, weaving, and fiber dyeing. She and Jon traveled together to learn from masters in annual visits to Penland in Asheville, North Carolina and Mendocino, California. She had the pleasure of learning from one of the few remaining mentors teaching the ancient art of indigo dyeing in Kyoto, Japan. Ellie saw art in everything and created everywhere she went.

Ellie's innate creativity flowed into the kitchen, where she perfected a recipe book full of specialties, including her infamous dark chocolate cake. Forever the master of her crafts, she was one of the original foodies, respected for her refined palate, often invited to dine and critique the Houston food scene as a critic for the Houston Post.

Ellie's light radiated into every room she entered, enveloping every relationship, space, and community she touched. One of her defining characteristics was her unique sense of humor. To know Ellie was to know provocative wit, comfort, and sincerity.

Ellie said that her best art, assisted by Jon, was her sons. Her children and grandchildren were the loves of her life. She celebrated who they are with pride and joy.

The center point of her life was always Jon. Wherever he was, she wanted to be close to him, supporting him, and loving him. And she received the same love from him. They were each other's dream makers. Although Ellie and Jon traveled the world together, their greatest adventure was just being home together, being together. They had a bond that nurtured and sustained each other, the family they grew together, and helped her find peace.

In her final days, Ellie began writing her own obituary. Her words are included here, and the rest was lovingly finished by her three granddaughters and her niece, Julie. Although she could not be with them to edit the final "edition," Ellie's spirit is everlasting.

The family wishes to express deep appreciation to Dr. Frank Fossella and to Ellie's caregiver, Joanna Torrecampo, for their excellent care.

Ellie's Celebration of Life will be held on Wednesday, July 22, 2026, from 5:00–8:00 pm, at the McGovern Centennial Gardens, 1500 Hermann Drive, Houston, Texas 77004.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation in Ellie's memory to the Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, <https://crafthouston.org/annual-fund-donation/>.

Upcoming Events

Celebration of Life

JUL **22**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

McGovern Centennial Gardens
1500 Hermann Drive
Houston, TX 77004