

The Graduate

Martha Mangrum got married when she was only 18 years old. A young Air Force cadet by the name of Marvin Irvin swept her off her feet and they “landed” in matrimony on July 2, 1950. Martha followed her husband as the Air Force carried him to places all over the world including Louisiana, Alaska, the Philippines, and Texas.

Martha and Marvin were blessed with two children – a boy and a girl – Marty and Sarah. Martha dedicated her life to caring for her husband, her children, and many others that were brought into her life.

Because she got married so young and life got so busy, Martha never earned her high school diploma. She had always wanted to accomplish that task, and with the encouragement of family and friends, she set out to complete her course work even though she was in her nineties! Her caregiver and friend, Alexandria Lee, was especially helpful and encouraging as she studied with Martha and assisted her in completing her assignments through Avalon Christian Academy. Martha’s eyesight was not good and her health was failing, but she pressed on. She completed her final test, and it was submitted for grading.

Martha’s body was tired, and she passed from this life on August 20, 2026. She was 94 years old. On that same day, the family received word that she had passed her final exam and had been awarded her high school diploma. Her diploma states, “This certifies that Martha Bell Irvin has satisfactorily completed the Course of Study prescribed for Graduation and is therefore entitled to this Diploma.”

As meaningful as it was to Martha to complete her high school education, I believe there is something that was even more important to her.

What meant most to Martha was not that she got her name on a diploma but that her name was written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. The Book of Life is the heavenly record in which God writes the names of those who accept His offer of salvation in Christ. In the Holman Bible Dictionary, Jeff Cranford explains: “Those whose names are in the book have been born into God’s family through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:23; Revelation 13:8); remain faithful in worship of God (Revelation 13:8;17:8); are untouched by the practice of abomination and falsehood (Revelation 21:27); are faithful through tribulation (Revelation 3:5); and are fellow workers in the work of Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:3).” *

The Good News (the Gospel) is that even though we are sinners separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and thereby destined for destruction (Matthew 7:13-14), God loves us so much that He gave His Son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16).

God will save from sin and add to the Book of Life those who place their faith and trust in Jesus (Acts 16:30-31), turn from their sins in repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confess Jesus before men (Romans 10:9-10), and are baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). God will keep in His books the names of those who continue to follow Jesus faithfully (1 John 1:7-9; Revelation 3:5).

To earn a high school diploma at the age of 94 – that's remarkable! To graduate to glory when one passes from this life – that's heavenly. And that's what's most important. Martha Irvin's life and passing bear witness to this truth.

-- David A. Sargent

* In loving memory of Martha Bell Mangrum Irvin (April 21, 1932 – August 20, 2026). Until we meet again.