

IRENE VODZAK KUSMIRA



Age 93, died peacefully on May 9, 2024, at her daughter's home in Butler, PA. She was a 65-year resident of Castle Shannon, PA, and long-time parishioner of St. Anne's Roman Catholic Church.

Born on February 7, 1931, on the South Side of Pittsburgh, Irene was the daughter of Michael Vodzak and Sophia Lopata Vodzak. She was the third youngest of 11 children, named after an

earlier sibling who had passed away. The Vodzak siblings were extremely close. They referred to each other as "dear Pete," "our John," and "my Mary," leaving a lasting impression of what it meant to be family. Aunts, uncles, and cousins rarely missed the many holidays, weddings, and other family gatherings over the years. Their last family reunion was attended by more than 300 people!

Irene attended St. Matthew's School and then Morse School for Girls on Pittsburgh's South Side. She worked at South Side Hospital and Klebers Suitcase Factory before becoming a homemaker. She later helped support her family by cleaning houses. Irene accomplished everything she set her mind to doing.

Irene and Al Kusmira were married on May 21, 1952, in St. Matthew's Slovak RC Church. They were married for nearly 55 years before Al's passing. The couple raised four children: Al, Karen, Wayne, and Mark. A second daughter passed away at birth.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was predeceased by brothers, Mike Vodzak (MaryAnn Mondel), John Vodzak (Catherine Boorich), Ed Vodzak, Pete Vodzak (Jeannie Brown); and sisters, Margaret Vodzak (Sam Mamula), Mary Vodzak (Joe Piatek), Irene Victoria Vodzak, and Cecilia Vodzak (Fred Kareokowski).

She is survived by devoted sister, Anna Mae Vodzak Arch (Larry Arch). Irene and Anna Mae were best friends. Rarely a day passed without speaking to each other. She, Larry, and Irene celebrated birthdays together and shared vacations, creating wonderful memories. A brother, Bobby Vodzak; his wife, Betty Belajac Vodzak; and sister-in-law, Dolly Rugiel Vodzak; as well as numerous nieces and nephews, mourn her loss.

Irene is also survived by her children: Al Kusmira (Nancy Melhorn), Karen Kusmira Melis (Terry Melis - whom Irene considered a son), Wayne Kusmira (Tiena), and dedicated son Mark Kusmira (Kimberly Hancock). Irene had seven grandchildren: Matthew Melis (Samantha Lopez), Kerri Melis Lindsay (Mitchell Lindsay), Ryan Kusmira (with whom Irene shared a birthday), Natalie Kusmira, Al Kusmira III (Tonya Shaw), Amanda Kusmira Allen (Mike Allen), and John Wayne Kusmira. Irene had four great-grandchildren: Kurt, Adam, Lincoln, and Scarlett Kusmira.

Irene had a unique passion for life. She loved baking, working in her backyard planting flowers, cheering on her Pirates and Steelers, and decorating her home for the holidays. She never missed a family get-together, a loved one's birthday, or a chance to tip the mail carrier a can of soda. She had a wonderful ability to connect with family, friends, and even strangers in a way that made them feel special; no two relationships were ever the same for Irene. The cards, calls, and letters to and from family and friends meant the world to her. She was at her happiest when surrounded by her loved ones, telling stories and laughing.

That enthusiasm for life never diminished over the years. She learned to drive a car in her sixties, visited her family's Slovak homeland for the first time at nearly seventy, and attended her first Pirates baseball game in her eighties. On her 90th birthday, Irene stepped out on her front porch to see a car parade of her loved ones being escorted down the street in her honor by Castle Shannon's police force and fire department. The excitement on her face that day will be just one of the many, many memories our family will hold dear whenever we think of our beloved sister, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Our Irene.

Visitation will be held on Friday, May 17, 2024, from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m. at **BEINHAUER FAMILY SERVICES**, located on 2820 Washington Road, McMurray, PA 15317.

The closing prayer will be at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 18, 2024, at the funeral home. A Memorial Mass will follow at St. Anne's Church, 400 Hoodridge Drive, Castle Shannon, PA 15234 at 9:30 a.m. Final goodbyes will be at Jefferson Memorial Park Chapel, marked by a short eulogy from grandson, Matt Melis. A memorial breakfast will be held after the service. Pallbearers will be Ryan Kusmira, Matt Melis, Kerri Melis Lindsay, Mitchel Lindsay, Al Kusmira III, and Dennis Vodzak.

Irene was under the wonderful hospice care of Lutheran Senior Life VNA Hospice. They led us through each stage of guiding her along the journey to a peaceful passing. Their kindness and respect for her and our family was truly a blessing. In lieu of flowers, please make out gifts in Irene's memory to VNA Hospice, c/o Lutheran SeniorLife Foundation, 300 West Beaver St., Zelienople, PA 16063. Phone: 724-453-6014.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb