

ELIZABETH HELEN JAKIEL



Age 89, of Kennedy Township, Pennsylvania, passed away suddenly on Saturday, September 28, 2024. She lived a full and wonderful life as the matriarch of the Jakiel family.

Elizabeth was the fourth and last child of Andrew and Helen Zelazny, born on December 3, 1934, at St John's Hospital in Pittsburgh. She had three older brothers, Andrew, Edward and Joseph. Her father passed away when

she was only six, leaving her mother to raise Elizabeth and her brothers alone, in a home on Euclid Avenue. Her brother, Edward, began building a new home on some property the family owned on Ewing Road. Once completed, Elizabeth moved here with her mother and brothers. This was the place she would call home for most of her life.

She attended Ken Mawr Elementary School on Pine Hollow Road. This was the first school in Pennsylvania built with multiple rooms and a gymnasium, not a one-room schoolhouse. Elizabeth liked school and developed a love of reading, which continued all her life. Her childhood was difficult, but she entertained herself by playing hopscotch, jumping rope and bouncing a ball against her house.

Being a widow with bills to pay, her mom took a job cleaning at Joseph Horne's department store in Pittsburgh, which meant Elizabeth was home alone frequently. When she was in the 7th grade, she made the school basketball team and played guard. After games, she walked the 1.5 miles home until her friend, Peggy Williams, asked her to stay at her house. (Her dad was the school principal.) Her brother Edward's wife, Margie, bought her a little black suitcase with the initials "B.Z." (Betty Zelazny) for these overnight trips. Our family still treasures this little suitcase.

She spent many hours with a neighbor, Mrs. Barnes, who taught her to garden, sew, and play the piano. Elizabeth found great joy in these skills and used them throughout her life.

Elizabeth attended Stowe High School and took academic classes for two years, but there was no money for her to attend college. She switched to commercial classes and loved shorthand – not so much typing and bookkeeping. She graduated in 1952. During this time, she met the love of her life, Louis, who worked at Kolinsky grocery store on Chartiers Avenue in McKees Rocks. He was three years older than her and they went to Elizabeth's high school prom together.

Elizabeth was a bright, young woman. She got a job in the Accounts Payable Department for ALCOA in the Grant Building in Pittsburgh, while Louis served in the Army during the Korean War. After his honorable discharge, they were married in August of 1955, at St. Malachy Church. Elizabeth and Louis lived in her childhood home and began their family – a daughter first, followed by three sons and then another daughter. She was an excellent homemaker, cook and baker and sewed almost all of her children's clothes. She loved to garden and made juice, jams and jellies from the fruit trees on their property. She canned vegetables to feed her large family and was well-known for her delicious homemade nut rolls, apple pies and pierogies.

As her children grew, Elizabeth was active in their church and school activities. She had an artistic flair that came in handy for school projects and decorated her home lovingly by sewing drapery, making quilts, and upholstering furniture that was worn out by her five children.

After Louis retired from the Postal Service in 1986, they helped their children and friends with childcare in their home. Elizabeth loved the hot weather and family vacations at Kiawah Island, South Carolina and Bradenton, Florida to attend Pittsburgh Pirates Spring Training. The hotter the weather, the better for her! Their children were getting married and starting families of their own. They were delighted to become grandparents and the Jakiel family continued to grow.

In December of 2015, Elizabeth suffered a stroke that left her unable to speak, walk or use her right hand. She was not able to live at home with her beloved Louis, who visited her almost daily in a local skilled nursing facility. After nine months of therapy, she was able to walk, speak, and begin using her left non-dominant hand. Everyone told her it couldn't be done, but on September 16, 2016, Elizabeth returned to her home to live with her husband, a true example of what love and determination can do. It was not an easy time, but with the help of family and excellent caregivers, they were together again in their own home.

Elizabeth was able to spend time reading and taught herself to paint watercolors with her left hand. Their dining room table was frequently covered with a puzzle and if the weather was nice, Louis and Elizabeth would spend hours together sitting on their front porch, watching the world go by. Life was simple and quiet. That was what they wanted.

In April 2020, Louis passed away in the early days of the pandemic. Elizabeth continued to live in her home with the support of her family and her caregiver, Kim, until earlier this year. Her best days were spent with visits by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, finishing each day with a bowl of ice cream. She loved sending birthday and anniversary cards to her many family members.

At 89, she began to need more help with daily tasks. After a brief illness, she moved to Heritage Valley Senior Living, a mere five minute drive from her home. There, she found companionship, conversations and three hot meals a day with dessert! The staff often remarked that Elizabeth attended every activity they offered and was rarely in her room. She especially enjoyed the musical programs at the facility and the rocking chairs on their front veranda. She spent many hours there, enjoying the hot, hot summer and the beautiful gardens on the grounds. It would be her final summer and it was an excellent one.

Together from their home in Kennedy Township, Elizabeth and Louis raised five children, Carolyn (Richard) Weaver, Robert (Michele) Jakiel, Thomas (Julie) Jakiel, Donald (Anette) Jakiel and Amy (Martin) Durkin. Elizabeth was the cherished "Gram" to her 14 grandchildren, Matthew, Sara (Jon), Andrew, the late Jessica Weaver, Steve (Amanda), Ryan (Allison), Samantha, Lara, Caleb (Victoria), Carli (Christian), Courtney (Gino), Colin and Thomas and Emily Durkin. She was thrilled to welcome her eight great-grandchildren, Asher, Levi, Kendall, Micah, Braelyn, Aurora, Brielle and Elliana. Family and friends are welcome for Visitation on Monday, October 7, 2024, at the ANTHONY M. MUSMANNO FUNERAL HOME, 941 McCoy Road, McKees Rocks, PA 15136, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. A private Funeral service will be held for the family in the Musmanno Chapel. Burial will follow at the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies. Please express your sympathies through our family online guest book at

www.musmannofh.com

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