

FLO LISTWAK



Mom - Flo Listwak, passed away on Wednesday, October 2, 2024.

Many of you know our Mom, Flo Listwak ("Flo", "Mom", or "Gram") as a wonderful, fun-loving woman. However, you may not know some of the more interesting aspects of her life. Born Florence Henrietta Kulikowski on July 17, 1942, she was the only child of Ziggy and Henrietta in Natrona Heights, PA. Soon after Mom was

born, her mother Henrietta passed away after complications associated with appendicitis. Ziggy, a young father all alone with an infant child, was distraught and he moved back with his parents who were Polish immigrants who were still raising his younger siblings. In fact, the first language that Flo learned was Polish (it has been said that Great-Grandma Listwak loved that Flo spoke Polish). She didn't begin speaking English until age seven, probably when she began attending school. Mom often commented that her earliest memories as a child were filled with fun, laughter and enjoying her grandmother's home cooking. She adored her aunts and uncles, who were like older brothers and sisters and helped to take care of her. She was very proud of her Polish heritage and her family.

Interestingly, Flo never learned to swim and was not very good at riding a bike, even as an adult. This was on full display when we rented her a tricycle to ride around Hilton Head Island. She once shared with me that when she was a child, her toes were caught in the spokes of a bike wheel while sitting on the handlebars. I guess this experience had a lasting impact. As an adult, Mom achieved a rare accomplishment ("legend status") of a hole-in-one at River Forest Golf Club.

After her father remarried, she was blessed to have two younger brothers, and the family moved into their own home on Pacific Avenue in National Heights on top of the hill and several blocks away from her grandparents. She was able to walk to her grandparents' house after school and remained very close to them the rest of her life. After high school graduation in 1960, she graduated from Robert Morris College secretarial school and was employed at PPG Industries, while still living with her parents. Flo gave each paycheck to her father who took a third for rent, set aside a third for Flo's savings and gave her the remaining third for spending money.

She met her husband Chuck Listwak while visiting her Aunt Joann one evening. Chuck was babysitting the children next door with his friend who happened to be Aunt Joann and Uncle Walt's nephew. Their relationship blossomed and they were eventually married on July 29, 1967, honeymooning in Niagara Falls. Their first home was an apartment in Tarentum, near Natrona Heights and they eventually settled into the house at Vance Drive where they raised their family.

Chuck and Flo had two children (Jeff and Erin) and eventually six grandchildren (Jenny, Jules, Kate, Hannah, Will and Charlie). They were married for 27 years before Chuck passed away at age 51. This was a very difficult time for many of us who loved Chuck, especially Flo. Chuck was the love of her life, and she never considered remarrying or dating. And she had to adjust to life without her father or husband to take care of certain things that she never was involved with like paying the bills, yard work, etc. Eventually, Flo retired as an administrative assistant at Stewart Elementary School (which Chuck, Jeff and Erin attended). She moved to Foxmoor condominium community in Cranberry Township in 2007, living five minutes away from her children and their families. This was a blessing in so many ways. Flo was able to watch her grandchildren grow up and be a significant part of their lives. She was a huge help as a trusted babysitter, assisting with errands, hosting sleepovers and especially Foxmoor Fridays, which were fun summer evenings at her community pool filled with music, pizza and lots of laughs.

Gram especially loved spoiling her grandchildren and always allowed them to stay up late, watch whatever movies they wanted, and eat unlimited ice cream during sleepovers. She was a night owl, huge Steelers/Pittsburgh sports fan and enjoyed dining at MadMex and Burgers. She was a big fan of Franco Harris and once had her picture taken with PA Governor Dick Thornburg at a Pirates game. She was a night owl and allowed her grandchildren to stay up as late as her during sleepovers. Her specialties in the kitchen were chocolate chip cookies, pineapple pancakes and her famous pepperoni rolls which are still made by Jenny to this day. She loved the beauty of freshly planted flowers and the grace and peaceful sounds of birds, especially hummingbirds. She was known to replicate very good bird songs with her voice from time to time. Klondike bars, Tom Tucker mint ginger ale and M&M's were all staples at her house. As grandchildren grew in age and Gram began to slow down interactions with her became different. However, she was always the caring and gentle woman that we loved since we were kids.

Mom's legacy to all of us is a rich life filled with love and laughter. She (and Chuck) instilled within their children a sense of adventure, traveling twice across the continent to some amazing places, attended Super Bowl 13 and many other great memories. Mom instilled within us a strong faith and taught us how to pray, while rarely missing an opportunity to spoil us. She had a silly, fun side to her that could light up a room and at the same time could be extra sensitive and her feelings were easily bruised. She loved to listen to music (Johnny Mathis, Kenny Rogers, and whatever we were listening to at the time such as the Clarks). As Gram, there were many fun vacations to Hilton Head Island, the Outer Banks, Disney, and many of the national parks of the western U.S. There were often fights among the grandchildren as to who would share a room or bed with Gram on these trips. Whether it was walks on the beach searching for shells with her grandchildren, spotting buffalo as we retraced family trips out west, or happy hours in the hot tub after a day of adventure, Mom's golden years were filled with a lifetime of treasured memories. She also traveled to Italy, Nashville and Poland with her friends creating other fond memories. One of her last trips was a vacation to the Caribbean Island of St. John with her children and their families.

Mom was a social butterfly, however, could sometimes retreat into silence, especially in larger gatherings. I suspect that this was related to the burden of Chuck's premature passing that she carried her entire life and never really overcame. Flo was a shopaholic in her later years, enjoying being a "girly girl" and treating herself to new outfits or jewelry that always matched. And she especially loved spoiling her grandchildren.

Mom lived a rich life in her golden years despite some of the difficulties she endured during her lifetime. It was truly a blessing to have her so close to her families for the past 17-plus years. Now she is in heaven with Dad.

We love you Mom, Gram, Flo!

Z miloscia (with love),

Your Family

Family and friends are welcome on Sunday from 2-6 pm at **DEVLIN FUNERAL HOME OF CRANBERRY TOWNSHIP**, 2678 Rochester Road, Cranberry Township. A Mass of Christian Burial will be held Monday at 10 a.m. at Divine Grace Parish, St. Ferdinand Church, with Rev. Jim Wehner officiating.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be made to Divine Grace Parish in Cranberry Township or at www.alz.org/pa.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb