

Betsy Karch Wilson

March 22, 2025

May 28 2025: Colleague AA In Memoriam Report

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Text: Mary Elizabeth "Betsy" Karch Wilson

March 28, 1939 - May 20, 2025

Mary Elizabeth "Betsy" Karch Wilson passed away peacefully on May 20, 2025, at the age of 86. Betsy was born on March 28, 1939, in Cleveland, Ohio, the daughter of George and Mary (Sargent) Karch. She was a devoted daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, cherished friend, and dedicated teacher who left an indelible mark on the lives of those who knew her.

Betsy grew up in the picturesque suburb of Shaker Heights, Ohio, where her childhood unfolded like a storybook. She spent her days riding her bike and roller skates through tree-lined streets, walking to and from school, and losing herself in imaginative play. Nestled in the middle of four siblings, she was bookended by two fiercely protective and competitive older brothers, and a younger sister who became, in many ways, her real-life doll, despite Jane's growing desire to be anything but. At the age of 16, she met a dashing, shy swimmer who would later become the love of her life. He was two years older, and from the start, there was something magnetic between them. They spent their courting days cruising around town in Dick's '49 two-toned Buick convertible. She was a cheerleader and he was a state champion swimmer - they were a perfect pair.

After graduating from high school, she attended Mount Holyoke College, earning her degree in 1961. Mount Holyoke was her ticket to the intellectual stimulation she craved. It was a place where ideas flowed freely around long dining tables and late-night dorm debates with like minded women. It was there that Betsy found her voice, sharpened her thinking, and surrounded herself with women who were curious, driven, and unapologetically bright. On July 1st of that same year, she married Dick at Covenant Church in Cleveland with a beautiful backyard reception at her parent's home. Their marriage, nearly 64 years strong, was a testament to enduring love and devotion. He was her everything. Dick was her daily sustenance.

Betsy cherished the years she spent living in France and Germany with

Dick while he served as a helicopter pilot in the U.S. Air Force. She fondly recalls learning the language while residing off-base, a deliberate choice to fully embrace the tempting allure of French culture. The cobbled streets, baguettes, cheese and wine, and melodic conversations became part of a new, cherished rhythm - one that broadened her world and deepened her love of life's small, beautiful details. She later dedicated herself to raising their family of 5 - which came to include Fernando, a foreign exchange student from Mexico - while actively volunteering and creating beautiful, welcoming homes in Birmingham, Chagrin Falls, Indianapolis, and eventually Northport and Traverse City.

In 1980, she earned her Master's degree in Education from Butler University and began teaching children with learning disabilities in Indianapolis. In the late 1980s, she and Dick made a bold choice to move to "The Red House" in Northport to preserve and care for their beloved family summer home. Dick bought a Cape Dory, and many perfect afternoons were spent sailing on the crystal clear blue waters of Northport Bay. Betsy continued her educational work at the Career Tech in for 10 years, Traverse City first as a reading instructor and later as the writer and administrator of a grant-funded program supporting at-risk youth.

In addition to her deep commitment to education and family, Betsy had a love for volunteering with numerous organizations, traveling, and gardening. She loved to sing with Village Voices and at church, was a voracious reader and member of a number of book clubs, and always cherished time spent with her many friends. Later in life, she discovered a new creative outlet in acting, writing, drawing, and painting. Surrounded by the beauty of the lake and the nature she so loved, Betsy found peace and inspiration. She was someone whose smile brought joy to others and who worked for peace at all levels - in her home, her community, and the world around her.

Betsy was a devoted, loving mother to Rick (Barb) Wilson of Northport, Scott (Suzie) Wilson of Traverse City, Katie (Brian) Barker of Indianapolis and Fernando (Ana Maria) Mestre of Mexico City. She found great joy in her grandchildren, being "Mimi" to Chris (Abby) and Lizzie (Matt Arnold) Barker, Nate and Blaise Wilson, and Steve (Amanda Wakeman) Thoms and adored her two great-grandsons, Matthew and Noah Barker of Cincinnati.

Betsy will be remembered for her strength, kindness, creativity, and unwavering love for her husband, children, and grandchildren. Her smile and laugh were truly contagious, lighting up every room. She had

a way of making everyone feel seen and loved. She wasn't just a mom to her own, she was a mom to so many. Her legacy lives on in the lives she touched.

She was preceded in death by her parents, George and Mary Karch; her siblings, George Karch Jr., Sargent Karch, and Jane Martin; and her grandson, Charles Thoms.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of Michigan (<https://www.hom.org/donate/>) We are deeply grateful for all of Betsy's gifted nurses and caregivers at Orchard Creek and Bay Ridge. Tammy Grant, in particular, was a special gift to Betsy and our family.

A celebration of life will be held from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Trinity Church of the United Church of Christ in Northport on Monday, June 30th.

Please share condolences and memories with the family at www.martinson.info.

Arrangements are with the Martinson Funeral Home and Cremation Services of Leelanau.

0164608 Mrs. Mary E. Wilson

Birth Name: Mary E Karch

Deceased Date: 05/20/25

Reunion Class(es): 1961

Last Address of Deceased: (Preferred Address)

6270 Red Fox Run

Traverse City, MI 49686-6133

Address Chapters:

5440-NORTHERN MICHIGAN

Relations...:

Wilson, Fernando - Son

- Source: RLA

Wilson, Katie - Daughter

- Source: RLA

Wilson, Rick - Son

- Source: RLA

Wilson, Scott - Son

- Source: RLA

Wilson, Richard N. - Widower

- Source: RLA

Employment

Employer	Start Date	End Date	Position
Washington Township, IN Public	09/01/81	01/31/88	Teacher
TBA Intermediate School Dist	09/01/88	12/30/88	Teacher

Volunteer

Organization	Start Date	End Date	Role
Class of 1961	07/01/05	06/30/06	Misc Reunion Chair
Class of 1961	07/01/90	06/30/91	Reunion Co-Chair
Class of 1961	07/01/15	06/30/21	Reunion Program Chair
Class of 1961	07/01/91	06/30/92	Class Agent

Education

Institution	Degree	Date Rcvd
Mount Holyoke College	AB	06/01/61
Butler University	MED	06/01/80