



## Joyce Paquette

April 16, 1925 - June 3, 2022

Mary Joyce Paquette, 97, died June 3, 2022 after a short illness. A resident of Bonita Springs, Florida, Joyce was born April 16, 1925 in Shullsburg, Wisconsin, the youngest child and only daughter of John M. Gerlach and Mary H. (Dodge) Gerlach. She was a music major and member of the music fraternity Sigma Alpha Iota at the University of Wisconsin, graduating in 1946. She became a public school music teacher in Kohler, Wisconsin, in her early 20s, and was the first woman band director for the Kohler Company at a time when corporations still had their own musical organizations. In 1948, Joyce married J. W. (Bill) Paquette, also from Shullsburg, and moved with him for college, graduate school and jobs while raising their seven children. Their marriage lasted over fifty-two years until Bill passed away in 2000.

After stints in Madison, Wisconsin, Lafayette and Elkhart Indiana, the family moved to Des Moines, Iowa in 1961. There, in addition to wrangling kids, Joyce continued to work as an organist and instrumental music teacher. She pursued a graduate degree as well, receiving the Masters of Music Education from Drake University in 1971. In addition to her professional music-making, both she and Bill were long-time members of an informal carol group that enjoyed year-round get-togethers and formed a close group of friends.

In 1979 Joyce and Bill moved to Champaign for Bill's job at the University of Illinois. The excellent performing arts and big-time sports offerings were an

unexpected benefit of their move, nurturing Joyce's already broad knowledge of the issues of the day and current events. They spent over 20 happy years in that community with Joyce continuing as a professional organist for several churches before retirement.

Since the earliest years in Iowa the family spent vacations in Clear Lake. After Bill's retirement they bought property in Clear Lake, which became the summer home and a focal point for family gatherings. Around 1999 they became winter residents in Highland Woods in Bonita Springs.

After Bill's death, Joyce continued her life attentive to her children, grandkids and great-grandkids in a family that started big and only got bigger. She was the organist at St. Leo's for a number of years. Very social, she joined in the activities in Highland Woods, making many friends, playing golf regularly until she was about 85 and enjoying some serious bridge well after that. She spent a good part of each day reading—and arguing about—the news, doing crosswords, and more recently, catching up on the classics she felt she missed out on in her youth. Her true passion was sports, having grown up with a dad and brothers who played semi-pro and professional baseball. She would follow any team, and practically any sport, with a family connection, college or pro, and it's safe to say she knew more about the players and standings than any of her children.

In 2017 Joyce settled year-round in Bonita Springs. Fiercely independent, she lived on her own terms—and would let you know what those terms were. With the help of some excellent caregivers in the later years, she was able to stay in her condo in Highland Woods until an infection sent her to the hospital just a few days before her death.

In addition to her husband, Joyce was preceded in death by her three brothers and sisters-in-law: Joseph and Josephine (Beckwith) Gerlach, Charles and

Rose (Fleming) Gerlach, and John Glen and Mary Jean (Hebenstreit) Gerlach; brother-and sister-in-law Robert and Joyce (Jeffrey) Paquette. Survivors include seven children: Mary Paquette-Abt (Jeffrey Abt), Huntington Woods, MI, Patricia Davis (Richard), Circle Pines, MN, William Paquette (Marie-Francoise), Boston, MA, John Paquette, Bonita Springs, FL, Elizabeth Davis (Peter), Plymouth, MN, Peter Paquette (Heather), Orlando, FL, Peg Paquette-Willis (Steve Willis), Urbandale, IA ; sixteen grandchildren: Uri Abt (Yvonne Lam), Danya Abt (Zachary Halberd), Susannah Prochazka (Daniel), Amanda Lenweaver (James), Adam Davis (Minerva Garcia), Olivia Paquette, Elodie Paquette, Ali Willis, Bernadette Willis, Matthew Davis (Sarah), Christine Watras (Matthew), Emily Piepho (Mark), Eric Paquette (Ariana), Chase Paquette, Sarah Paquette, Grace Paquette; and nine great-grandchildren.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Matthew's Church in Shullsburg, Wisconsin on June 16, 2022, at 2:00 PM, with visitation beginning at 1:00 PM at the church. Interment will follow immediately at St. Matthew's Cemetery.

In place of flowers, Joyce would be pleased to know you contributed in her memory to the Glaucoma Foundation. <https://glaucomafoundation.org/>

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUN **16**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

St. Matthew's Catholic Church  
344 N Judgement St.  
Shullsburg, WI 53586

## Memorial Mass

JUN **16**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

St. Matthew's Catholic Church  
344 N Judgement St.  
Shullsburg, WI 53586

# Tribute Wall



“ *Joyce Paquette*

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October 09, 2023 at 03:40 AM



“ *Bob and I (Charlene) will miss our next door neighbor for over 20 years!  
Somehow I always managed to make too much for dinner and was so happy that Joyce was willing to indulge in my food gifts.  
We will miss her taking daily walks with Joanna.*

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**Bob and Charlene Stencel** - June 13, 2022 at 04:52 PM