



Barbara J. Denault

April 13, 1942 - February 27, 2025

Barbara J. Denault, 82, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and sister passed away peacefully on February 27, 2025, at Carriage Crossing Senior Living in Bloomington, IL where she resided since 2020.

Barbara was the third of five daughters born to Clarence and Antoinette (Toni) Wilkins in Bradley, IL on April 13, 1942. She attended school and Mass at St. Joseph Church in Bradley, IL which shaped the faith she lived. She later instilled her faith in her children and shared it with others through her kindness and hugs.

Despite an appreciation for fine clothes, enjoyment for the Bradley-way-of-life, and cruising the square in her '57 Chevy, she fell in love with and married Ivan Denault, a farmer from Herscher, IL, on July 6, 1963, at her home church. She prided herself on learning to drive the tractors and being able to contribute to the family farm operation and proving every day to her dad that she could indeed be a farmer's wife. Ivan and Barb often said that the best years of their lives were working in the fields together.

As a mother, she was always there for her children. She was a hard worker and lived selflessly, putting the needs of her family before her own. She set an example for her children by starting the day early to accomplish as much as possible. While working, she usually had classic country western or pop music of the 50's and 60's playing. She did not allow the television to be on during the day. Doing so instantly translated to an assignment to clean the house, work in the garden, or tend to the livestock. On Sundays, she ensured that her

children attended Mass and learned their prayers. In the evenings she knelt with them to pray prior to bed. When her children left the farm for college and work, she lovingly helped them begin their journeys. When they married, she welcomed their spouses and served as a great example of a mother-in-law. As a grandmother, she was the perfect source of reassurance and comfort. She loved rocking babies while humming Red River Valley. Her kitchen was filled with love and the best home-cooked meals, especially her fried chicken and homemade dumplings. After dinner, she expected everyone to help with the dishes, and in her spirit of keeping everyone busy, she led everyone on a walk down the road or through the fields.

As Alzheimer's began to affect her memory, she continued her life of faith and served as an example of grace. She made many close friends with the residents and staff of Carriage Crossing. She participated and led many of the activities and encouraged other residents when they were down or hurting. She seldom complained of her own situation and strived to be a comfort to others in need. Her reprieve was going out to the Garden of Paradise of Bloomington on Saturday mornings for pecan waffles, whipped cream, and bacon where she was affectionally known as "Mama" by the owners and staff. Barbara is survived by her children Denise (Jim) Baker, Steve (Christel) Denault, Chris (Susan) Denault, Marcia (Mike) Grabow, 11 grandchildren, 2 great-grandchildren, and 3 sisters: Patricia McLean, Nancy Witthoft, and Claudia Wilkins. She was preceded in death by her husband, parents, brothers-in-law, and sister Margaret (Margie) Wilkins.

Visitation will be at St. Joseph Church, Bradley on Thursday, March 6 from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. with Mass to follow at 11:00. Barbara was a lifelong blood donor to the American Red Cross. Donations may be made to the American Red Cross or to Carriage Crossing of Bloomington.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 6. 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Joseph Catholic Church
211 N. Center Street
Bradley, IL 60915
(815) 939-3573
<http://www.stjosephbradley.org>

Funeral Mass

MAR 6. 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Joseph Catholic Church
211 N. Center Street
Bradley, IL 60915
(815) 939-3573
<http://www.stjosephbradley.org>

Tribute Wall

JW

“ Thinking of you at this sad time. I lived next door to you on Prairie Ave. many many many years ago! Although I was very young I have good memories of that time. Jane Walters Westerhoff

Jane Westerhoff - March 05, 2025 at 06:24 PM

DB

Thank you for sharing, Jane. Mom had very fond memories of growing up on Prairie Avenue ❤️ I really appreciate your comment. I believe I met you at her service? Thank you so much for remembering mom. ❤️
Denise

Denise Baker Baker - March 09, 2025 at 10:07 AM

RM

“ My sympathy to the family. I got to know Barb when she applied to work at the Redwood Inn. I helped train her to become a cashier of which she did a great job! Hated to see her leave when she and Ivan had other plans. “Rosie”

Rosalind Marcotte - March 05, 2025 at 04:43 PM

DB

Oh another great time in her life. It did her so much good to work at Redwood. Great years for her! Thank you for all you did for her Rosie! She really stepped out of her realm to become cashier 😊

Denise Baker Baker - March 09, 2025 at 10:10 AM

GG

“ Gloria Graham lit a candle in memory of Barbara J. Denault



Gloria Graham - March 03, 2025 at 08:52 AM

DB

Thank you so much for remembering mom, Gloria. ❤️

Denise Baker Baker - March 09, 2025 at 10:11 AM

CW

“ One of my favorite memories of Barb was how she let my sister Margie and me use her bedroom upstairs while she was out with her friends or on a date for the evening. We played her records and (I'm sure) disturbed our parents when dancing in her upstairs bedroom. Ahhh ... a great memory! Love you, Barb. You are missed! Give Mom, Dad and Margie a big hug for me!! Love you!! ❤️



Claudia Marie Wilkins - March 02, 2025 at 09:30 AM



I always loved going to the farm to spend a few days, Aunt Barb always let me collect the eggs in the morning and we all would have a wonderful time 😊 once I got older and had a job, Uncle Ivan and Aunt Barb always made it a point to come track me down for hugs!!! I miss you both so much!! Rest in Peace, Love you both!! ❤️

Therese Baker - March 03, 2025 at 02:24 PM



Love this, Theresa!!!

Claudia Wilkins - March 04, 2025 at 09:58 PM

DB

*Aunt Claudia, i love that memory you shared! Unusual for a big sis to let the little ones in her room!
Theresa thank you for sharing your memory of farm visits, too. So nice to hear the stories.*

Denise Baker Baker - March 09, 2025 at 10:14 AM

SP

“ *I'm so very sorry for your loss. Mrs. Denault was the sweetest ladies I have ever known. The world has loss a wonderful person. My prayers and hugs go out to the family. My heart is broken for all of you. Sending love.*

Susan Pridemore - March 01, 2025 at 10:16 AM

DB

Susan, thank you so much; we certainly have lost a very bright part of our lives. We comfort ourselves believing she is reunited with other loved ones. We will continue on in her example and meet her again someday. Grateful for the love she left us. Thank you for opening your heart and sharing your words of comfort.

Denise Baker Baker - March 09, 2025 at 10:19 AM

SP

“ *Susan Pridemore lit a candle in memory of Barbara J. Denault*



Susan Pridemore - March 01, 2025 at 10:04 AM

DB

Thank you 🙏

Denise Baker Baker - March 09, 2025 at 10:20 AM