



## Joseph William Vits

March 25, 1937 - June 21, 2019

Joseph William Vits, age 82, of Kankakee, passed away Friday, June 21, 2019 at his home.

He was born March 25, 1937 in rural Shelby County, the son of Charles J. & Doris Carroll Vits.

Joseph married Diana Rose Liesenfelt on November 20, 1965 at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Kankakee.

Joe attended his first five years of school in Shelby county rural schools and graduated from Pana High School, class of 1955. Joe was recruited by the FBI the summer after graduation. He was assigned in Washington, D.C. Joe asked to be transferred to Springfield, but was not granted a transfer until he enrolled at Eastern Illinois University. He was a member of the Sigma Pi International fraternity and graduated from EIU in 1961 with a B.S. in secondary education. In 1962, he received a masters of science degree as a graduate assistant, also at Eastern Illinois University. Joe taught one year in Taylorville, before being recruited by Kankakee School District 111. He taught mechanical engineering/drafting and home architecture for two years at the old Kankakee High School. He later finished his specialist degree in school administration. He taught in the East Side Junior High most of his 32 years in District 111 before his retirement in 1994.

In 1970, Joe was honored by the Kankakee Jaycee's as the Outstanding Young Educator of the year.

Joe worked at various manufacturers and served as a team leader for

teenagers during the summer months. He taught chair caning and furniture refinishing at Kankakee Community College as an adult education instructor before 1971.

Joe's interests included flowers, genealogy, attending auctions and spending time with his family.

Joe is survived by his wife of 53 years, Diana; two daughters, Susan (Steve) Cornett of Seneca Falls, NY/Chicago and Jennifer (Bianca) Vits-Cruz of Grant Park; six grandchildren, Kayla Michel-Grove, Megan Michel, Zachary Cornett, Josh Vits, Ben Vits-Cruz, and Brooklyn Vits-Cruz; several nieces; one nephew; one brother, James Vits of Michigan; one brother-in-law, Don Havrilka of Pana; and one sister-in-law, Joanie Liesenfelt of Illinois.

Joe is preceded in death by his parents; and one sister, Joyce Lorraine Havrilka.

Cremation rites have been accorded.

A memorial visitation will be held from 9:00 a.m. until the 11:00 a.m. memorial Mass on Tuesday, June 25, 2019 at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Kankakee. Inurnment will follow at All Saints Cemetery in Bourbonnais.

Memorials may be made to Hospice of Kankakee Valley or St. Patrick Catholic Church in Kankakee.

# Cemetery Details

## All Saints Cemetery

1839 W. Route 102  
Bourbonnais, IL 60914  
(815) 933-2342

# Previous Events

## Memorial Visitation

JUN **25**. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Patrick Catholic Church  
428 S. Indiana  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
(815) 932-6716

## Memorial Mass

JUN **25**. 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Patrick Catholic Church  
428 S. Indiana  
Kankakee, IL 60901  
(815) 932-6716

# Tribute Wall

KC

“ *Kim Cole lit a candle in memory of Joseph William Vits*



Kim Cole - March 01, 2020 at 04:25 AM

JG

“ *My deepest sympathy to Diana and The Vits family. I met Joe through my mother Virginia Clark who taught with Joe at King Middle School. He took care of my husbands car when he went to Vietnam. I was attending SIU and was not allowed a car on campus so left it, ( a brand new corvette) at my mothers. We were not married at the time, Mother trusted Joe but I didn't know him until I returned to Kankakee after I married and signed up for classes that Joe taught. Chair caning, rush seats and furniture refinishing. A very enriching and enjoying class. Joe had such knowledge about so many different topics. I remember him taking apart ( piece by piece) a roll top desk and refinishing it as if it had just rolled off of the manufactures dock. Unbelievable! A lovely man who brought joy and his love of antiques to many. Sincerely, Jeri (Jeramae) Gregeris*

Jeri Gregeris - June 25, 2019 at 08:15 PM

AM

“ *Alice & Cynthia McEnary lit a candle in memory of Joseph William Vits*



Alice & Cynthia McEnary - June 23, 2019 at 11:05 PM

AD

“ *Armand DeBlouwe lit a candle in memory of Joseph William Vits*



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**Armand deBlouwe** - June 23, 2019 at 03:42 PM

AD

*I left Kankakee after seventh grade in 1969, but I will always remember his kindness and his warm smile. He was and is everything a teacher should be. He will be missed...*

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**Armand deBlouwe** - June 23, 2019 at 03:45 PM

TO

“ *I will miss the hours upon hours of discussing current events, changing political landscapes, economics, foreign affairs and most of all, sports! I especially enjoyed talking with Joe about his time in DC and Quantico VA working for the FBI (Quantico is a US Marine base that doubles as FBI headquarters, located off of I95 half-way between DC and Richmond). I used to live in VA and had been to Quantico several times (I had an old sales boss that was stationed there as a Marine, and we stopped at the base and ate lunch in town...Joe said he knew the cafe!). I will miss Joe greatly and send my love to Diana, Jennifer, Susan and their families*

*Tom Miskiewicz*

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**Tom** - June 23, 2019 at 12:57 PM

SC

*Thank Tom!*

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**susie cornett** - June 23, 2019 at 09:46 PM

JV

*Thank you, Tom!*


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**Jennifer Vits-Cruz** - June 24, 2019 at 10:00 AM

NA

*Our condolences to Diana, Susan and Jennifer. We have fond memories of all of you and Joe. Such a nice guy!*

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**Nick/Shirley Africano** - June 24, 2019 at 07:18 PM

YM

“ *Mr Vits was a very patient teacher. In his class I learned how to build a dog house and work on cars. One time, he was working under the hood of a car and one of the students crossed some wires and the place got smoked out, lol. Fire alarm went off. We all had to leave class and go outside. He never lost his cool in that moment. Thanks for the memories Mr Vits!!* 

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**Yousaf Mendez** - June 23, 2019 at 10:36 AM

JV

*Thank you! :-)*

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**Jennifer Vits-Cruz** - June 24, 2019 at 10:02 AM

MH

“ *So sorry for your loss. I worked with Joe at King Middle School. Just this past Monday (June 17th) I finally emptied my book bag after having retired 10 years ago. Among the items I found was a thank you note from him. Apparently, my students had made a book for him for his retirement. I was reminded of his thoughtfulness. The note was among the few items that I kept before discarding the rest. Jennifer was a student of mine when she was a third grader at Edison. What a pleasure it was to have her in my class! Rest in Peace, Joe.*

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**Mary Heck** - June 22, 2019 at 03:35 PM

SC

*Thank you for sharing this story.  
Susie (Daughter)*

**susie cornett** - June 23, 2019 at 07:18 AM

JV

*Thank you, Mrs. Heck for your kind words! We found the retirement book yesterday! :)*

**Jennifer Vits-Cruz** - June 24, 2019 at 09:58 AM

CS

“ *Carla Scheppler lit a candle in memory of  
Joseph William Vits*



**Carla Scheppler** - June 22, 2019 at 11:24 AM



“ *Rest in peace, Mr. Vits. He was my teacher  
and was a wonderful man.*



**Bob Schneider** - June 22, 2019 at 11:16 AM

SC

*Thank you.*

**susie cornett** - June 23, 2019 at 07:14 AM

JV

*Thank you!*

**Jennifer Vits-Cruz** - June 24, 2019 at 10:03 AM

ES

“ *Diana and family,*

*I had the pleasure of working with Joe at a local lumber yard after his retirement. Please accept my sincere condolences. You will be in my thoughts and prayers.*

*Eric Sadler*

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**Eric Sadler** - June 22, 2019 at 11:09 AM

SC

*Thank you!  
Susie (Daughter)*

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**susie cornett** - June 23, 2019 at 07:13 AM

JV

*Thank you, Eric!*

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**Jennifer Vits-Cruz** - June 24, 2019 at 10:04 AM

SD

“ *Diana and family, The family’s loss of such a wonderful soul is immeasurable. There are no words to ease your pain and sadness.*



*Our lives intertwined, as cousins in law, by Joe’s love of history and all the family souls who came before him, including yours and mine Diana.*

*Those souls have now greeted him at the gates of heaven, surrounding him with love and warmth and undoubtedly lively discussions of family history.*

*He will be forever in the memory of all the lives he touch on earth.*

*Thank you Joe for your enormous contribution to the Liesenfelt - Schweitzer genealogy quest.*

*Suzanne and Michael Dugas*

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**Suzanne Dugas** - June 22, 2019 at 09:51 AM

SC

*Thank you for your very kind words.  
Susie (Daughter)*

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**susie cornett** - June 23, 2019 at 07:12 AM

JV

*Thank you so much, Suzanne!*

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**Jennifer Vits-Cruz** - June 24, 2019 at 10:05 AM