



## Betty Jean Laughlin

August 24, 1951 - October 27, 2022

Age 71 of St. Paul, MN.

Passed away October 27, 2022

Betty Jean Merkel was born in Aberdeen, South Dakota on August 24th, 1951 to Ella (née Wolf) and Herbert Merkel. At the age of three, her family, including older sister Bonnie, moved to Carroll Avenue in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In school, Betty was a "spirited child" who danced her way across desks through Longfellow Elementary, then to Wilson Junior High and Central High School. At Central she made several lifelong friends-really, the only kinds of friends Betty had-and was a proud Minute Maid.

At the age of 15, Betty started her work career at the Dairy Queen on Lexington. Work was always a point of pride for Betty, who credited her "strong German work ethic" with the success that followed her at every job.

After high school, she married Richard Parkinson and had a daughter, Jessica. Later, the couple divorced, and the mother and daughter moved to an apartment back on Lexington.

Betty was working at Northern Airmotive in 1978 when she was sorting job applications for maintenance technicians. Although she was a tireless worker, Betty was still not what one might characterize as a "rule-follower," and surreptitiously examined the application of one young Air Force veteran who'd just moved up from Wichita, Kansas. It turns out that the applicant, Mark Laughlin, knew Betty's cousin, and the two started talking (a repeating motif in Betty's life). Betty's confidentiality violation paid off, as the two were married in

Bethlehem Lutheran Church (despite the groom being a strong Catholic, Betty got her way-another repeating motif) in 1979. The two had a son, Wade, in 1980 and daughter Katie in 1982. The family of five lived in a house on Hubbard Avenue, where Betty made a home for the rest of her life.

When the kids were a little older, Betty headed back to work. She made pies at Polly's Slow Foods, where she mastered the art of the lemon meringue and cheesecake, though it was her French Silk that stole the show at every holiday. (The legendary desserts were made en masse, stored in the freezer, and delivered to friends and in-laws, bringing delight at get-togethers that she didn't even attend). Eventually, the St. Paul Public School system drew Betty back in as a Food Service Aide, and she worked her way from Groveland to Webster to Highland Park, where she was Head Cook for many years.

When Betty's work ethic caught up to her in the form of shoulder surgery, she was forced to hang up the apron and move into the office. Drawing on her formidable typing, bookkeeping, behavior-modifying and pile-making skills, Betty worked as a school clerk at Mississippi Magnet, Longfellow-which she'd attended as a student!-and Linwood Elementary. One occasional office visitor was Bruce, her grandson, whom Betty and Mark raised from 18 months old. In 2015, Betty retired from St. Paul Public Schools. One of her retirement gifts was a book of the poems that she would write and occasionally read over the PA; her verse covered attendance policy, hand-washing, holiday schedules, use of the copy machine, and the life advice that Betty was known to dispense to anyone in earshot. Another gift Betty procured-whether ISD 625 knew it or not-was a READ poster featuring Jimmy Smits, which now hangs in her son's classroom in Shakopee, MN.

Retirement certainly did not temper Betty's energy, verve, or wit. She loved attending Zumba class, swimming laps, working in her garden, walking her beloved Ernie, and playing golf (she even hit the ball, occasionally, between conversations). She loved music and theater, taking her children and grandchildren to performances whenever she could. With Betty, who was she was traveling with was more important than where she was going, and she

especially cherished trips to Spain and New York with Katie; Hawaii, San Diego, and the Grand Canyon with Mark and all the kids and grandkids; Tucson with Mark to see Sharon and Ferdie; and any trip, even just to Hudson to visit her mother, with her sister Bonnie, with whom she shared a special bond. She was elated to be able to travel to Kenya with Mark in 2022 and commune with elephants-Betty loved almost all animals, but elephants held a special place in her heart.

Betty was diagnosed with lymphoma and passed away shortly thereafter, on October 27th, 2022-Betty and Mark's 43rd wedding anniversary-at United Hospital.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, November 3rd from 4-7 pm at Holcomb-Henry-Boom-Purcell Funeral Home in St. Paul, with a funeral service at Bethlehem Lutheran Church on Friday, November 4th at 11 am.

Every discussion about the State Fair, thrifting, tap dancing, cacti, Cabone's, swimming, White Castle, "Aldi's", clogging, or Chris Hemsworth will now be much less interesting or funny. Betty loved animals, so please make a donation in lieu of flowers to Animal ARK of Hastings, Minnesota. <https://animalkmn.org/>

Betty is survived by her loving husband, Mark, and grandson, Bruce Blaisdell; Katie and Matt Eickhoff of Peoria, Illinois; Wade, Emily, Tessa, Cohen and Booker Laughlin of Shakopee; Bonnie and Daniel Ashton of St. Paul; Ella and Archie Denucci of North Hudson, Wisconsin; Josh Ashton, Suzi Bordeaux, and Cody and Catelyn Ashton of Edina; Abby, Jason, Elisia, Sam, Allie, and Ava Ball of St. Paul; Monica and Gary Christopherson of Savage; Steve and Carla Laughlin of Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sheila and Brad Beuckens of Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and the innumerable friends that she made and loved along the way.

Visitation Thursday Nov. 3rd from 4-7 PM at Holcomb-Henry-Boom-Purcell Funeral Home, 536 N. Snelling Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104.

Memorial Service 11 AM Friday Nov. 4th (visitation at the church from 10-

11AM) at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Roy & Shields Ave., St. Paul.

The service will be livestreamed at [blcmidway.online.church](http://blcmidway.online.church).

Additional parking available at Central Baptist Church (420 N. Roy St., St. Paul).

Interment Ft. Snelling National Cemetery.

# Tribute Wall



“ Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels created a Tribute Video in memory of Betty Jean Laughlin



December 14, 2023 at 06:23 PM



“ I am so heartbroken to hear the news of Betty's passing. For the past 20 years, we have had a standing date for her haircuts, every 8 weeks, and we hardly ever missed a beat. We have been through so much together and I will miss her and our talks about life, travels, and family. Betty was loved not only by me but by all of us girls at the salon! We looked forward to her appointments and the stories she would share with us. I know how much she loved her family and I send you all my deepest sympathies. I picture Betty dancing her way up to the gates of Heaven with her beautiful smile that will be missed by all.



Shannon Huot - November 14, 2022 at 12:00 AM

CD

“ I will miss seeing Betty and Earnie walking in the neighborhood. I will also miss the great conversations we had when we ran into each other while walking.  
Betty baked a wonderful rhubarb pie. Her sense of humor was priceless.

Cyndee Daughtry - November 04, 2022 at 12:00 AM

GA

“ You will be missed my friend!

Gayle (Syvertsen) Adams - November 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

LD

“ Mark and family, we are so sorry for your loss. You are all in our prayers.

Larry and Kathy Dilley - November 03, 2022 at 12:00 AM

RW

“ I would like to extend by deepest condolences to the Betty Laughlin family.



Robert D Wing - November 02, 2022 at 12:00 AM

RB

“ I am sorry to learn of your loss. While I did not know Betty; Mark was a childhood friend from the old North French Ave neighborhood and Little Flower School, as well as O'Gorman High. Mark was always a good friend and a great guy. I'm certain Betty was awesome as well. May God bless her and her family.

Robert Bray - November 02, 2022 at 12:00 AM

TC

“ *Mark:  
So sorry to hear the bad news that Betty had passed.  
I just got the e-mail from Mark Brandt.  
I will give Kent a call tomorrow and let him know .  
My deepest sympathy.  
Terry C.*

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**Terry Carlson** - November 01, 2022 at 12:00 AM

AJ

“ *Betty was always known as the tough love mom to Wade's college friends. She liked to poke fun at us and was always incredibly welcoming.*



*There were times when we would park in front of Mark and Betty's house to walk to the State Fair even when we weren't with Wade. With Betty in the neighborhood, you knew things were going to be safe.*

*Her outstanding personality and loving nature will be missed.*

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**Adam Johnson** - November 01, 2022 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ *Mark and family,  
We are SO sorry for your loss. You are in our thoughts & prayers.*

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**Bob & Bernadette Stanbrough** - October 29, 2022 at 12:00 AM

CH

“ *We are sorry for your loss and thinking of your family at this time. I hope you can find comfort in spending time with family and sharing memories.*

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**CarolAnn & Nathan Hook** - October 29, 2022 at 12:00 AM

AW

“ *So sorry for your loss.* ”



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**Al & Bernadette Whipkey** - October 29, 2022 at 12:00 AM