Barbara Will, 75

Posted: Tuesday, March 10, 2009 10:06 pm


Barbara was born Aug. 11, 1933, to Clarence and Julia Couture in Greenfield, Mass. She graduated from Greenfield High School, Northampton Business College and Carleton College. She was the librarian in the Department of Research Chemistry at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, when she met Bob, a new instructor, who came to seek advice about moldy wallpaper in the ancient house he was sharing with Gus Mattensdorff. A year later on Dec. 22, 1956, Gus was serving as best man at their wedding at St. James Episcopal Church, Greenfield. Six months later Barbara and Bob headed west slowly pulling a trailer loaded with books and wedding presents. They moved to Northfield, where Bob began teaching at Carleton College.

Barbara’s professional life was in travel, beginning as an agent in 1975 and soon becoming manager of group sales, sending students on global semesters, singers on European choir tours, and professionals to international conferences. She continued as director of Northfield’s Convention and Visitors Bureau, bringing a record number of bus tours to Northfield, and later as a faculty member at Rasmussen College in Eagan, teaching courses in travel management. She enjoyed travel as part of her work and as part of her family life, visiting Asia, Latin America, Europe and North Africa.

Barbara loved sports, from attending her children’s competitions in the Northfield schools to watching the Twins, Vikings and Wimbledon and her favorite ice skaters. She explored her interests and enjoyed so many hobbies including fine cooking, collecting cookbooks, potting, weaving, flower gardening and entertaining children. She delighted in organizing the annual Christmas Tree Raising Party, the Easter Egg Hunt and gingerbread house-building parties at her home. Nothing brought her more pleasure than welcoming a child with a hug and a kiss and her undivided attention. Barbara was a gracious hostess to generations of college students, some of whom would cook with her, and to the many bank executives attending her husband’s summer seminars.

Barbara’s life was committed to the idea of service. She helped found the Northfield Open Door Nursery School and served on many boards including the Cannon Valley Regional Orchestra and All Saints Episcopal Church. She was on the founding board for the Northfield Area Foundation; served as president of the Northfield Historical Society, leading its largest fundraising campaign; and was the Northfield Rotary Club’s first female president and assistant governor of the Rotary district.

Barbara is survived by her loving husband, Robert; daughters, Jennifer (Mark) Labovitz and Leslie Vanderwood; three grandchildren, Jackson, Franklin and Zachary; sisters, Arlene Cocone and Marie (Ray) Woitkiewicz; and brothers, Raymond Couture, James Couture, Kenneth (Barbara) Couture and Bob Couture. She was preceded in death by her son, Jonathan; sisters, Patty Couture and Julie Sadlowsky; and brother, Carl Couture.

A remembrance service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 14, 2009, at All Saints Episcopal Church, located on the corner of Fifth Street and Washington Street, Northfield. Visitation will be from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday, March 13 at Bierman Funeral Home, 1316 Division St., Northfield.

In lieu of flowers, Barbara and her family would appreciate your consideration of a contribution to All Saints Church in Northfield at P.O. Box 663, Northfield, MN 55057, or to the Northfield Historical Society at 408 Division St., Northfield, MN 55057.

Arrangements by Bierman Funeral Home.


3/11/2009