
Joyce Arnold

Joyce Ann Arnold, nee Blim, 75, of Swansea, Ill., born Nov. 18, 1934, in Belleville, Ill., died Saturday, March 27, 2010, at her home, peacefully surrounded by her family.

She made you feel better about yourself and made you want to better yourself.

Joyce's easy smile and kind eyes were a true reflection of her compassionate and considerate nature. Whether through the eloquence of a handwritten note or the sincerity of a conversation, Joyce personified "Love thy Neighbor."

Her love and dedication to family were even greater. Joyce and Dick's nearly 52 year marriage was a true partnership, selflessly centered on their children's happiness, yet rooted in their love and respect for each other.

Her unconditional love, unwavering faith and undying loyalty radiated a confidence, pride and security that remains a constant, positive motivation for her family.

"Men don't stumble over mountains; they stumble over molehills," she would often say, one of innumerable idioms and phrases sprinkled in conversation to teach lessons and "get down to brass tacks."

"If we were all the same, it would be a dull world."

"Nothing would ever be accomplished in this world if one waited so long to do it, that no one could find fault with it."

"Everyone has a right to their opinion, but no one has a right to be wrong in their facts."

Her children and grandchildren were both inspired and amused by

her "Joyce-isms."

Joyce's wisdom was reinforced by her collection of quips, quotes and other writings. When words spoke to her soul, she would often clip them out or write them down, tucking some between the pages of a poetry book given to her as a child, a book that set the course for a lifetime appreciation of the written word.

Even in the last stages of her life, Joyce recalled her favorite poems and passages, her smile proof of how Emily Dickinson and Anne Morrow Lindbergh resonated in her soul.

Letter writing is an art Joyce perfected with a prayerful devotion to summoning the perfect phrase. With the precision and care of a diamond cutter, she would sit at the end of the kitchen table, pen in hand, crossing out nearly as much as she was writing, until she had crafted her gem. When someone needed encouragement or achieved some success, a letter from Joyce affirmed. Amidst tragedy and grief, carefully chosen words reflected her extraordinary empathy.

Joyce was Belleville's first "drive-up bank teller" at St. Clair National Bank and worked in Belleville banking for more than 30 years, including at the Bank of Belleville and Magna Bank. Many friends and customers will remember Joyce's friendly and helpful manner. She treated each customer with respect and a genuine interest in their concerns.

She caused an unusual phenomenon at the bank, where customers would often opt to wait in Joyce's

line rather than going to an open window.

She was a gracious hostess, perpetually reminding her children to be generous and attentive to guests in their home. Etiquette, thank-you notes and napkins on laps were among her expectations of her family.

Joyce's intuition was uncanny; she felt life deeply and was in tune with the lives, dreams and concerns of her children, often before they were themselves.

She was zany and she was poignant. A onetime singer on WIBV Radio, Joyce knew a song for any occasion. She would lead her siblings in a round of childhood tunes and would never fail to shed a tear upon hearing the strains of "Moon River," the song that played every evening on the hospital sound system during the months her son, Rick, stayed in pediatrics after his birth in 1962.

Joyce and Dick's relentless care for Rick allowed him a chance at life that doctors advised was improbable at best. His success in life was their proudest achievement. His untimely death in 2008 was their deepest sorrow. Our sorrow at Joyce's death is soothed by the joy we know she and Rick have found in their heavenly reunion, where she is probably doing his laundry!

She loved making a home and being at home, rather than traveling. Yet, Joyce's theme song was "Don't Fence Me In." Indeed, she refused to be pigeonholed or defined by anyone. She was clever

and thoughtful in her opinions, which were guided by her Christian duty, yet she was beholden to no one but her own conscience.



"Go to sleep in peace. God is awake."

Joyce entrusted to St. Jude her hopeless cases and to St. Anthony what we lost. Her St. Joseph statue was often turned toward the window in a vigil for family members away from home.

She hoped for her children to "stick together like glue."

To her adoring twelve grandchildren spread across two generations, she was "Nanny J" (NAHN-ee J.), teaching invaluable life lessons by demonstrating and expecting kindness, generosity, patience and good grammar. She encouraged fun, but did not tolerate mayhem. Nanny's rapid fire kisses and embraces will live forever in the hearts of those she called "sweet soul."

She was preceded in death by her dear son, Rick Arnold, who died March 6, 2008 and with whom Joyce shared a mutual inspiration and nurturing love; her parents, George L. and Clovena M., nee Isselhardt, Blim, to whom Joyce committed herself to their comfort and happiness; a brother and friend, Paul Blim, and father and mother-in-law, Elmer J. and Clara E. Arnold.

Surviving are her devoted and loving husband, Richard E. (Dick) Arnold of Swansea, Ill., whom she married June 28, 1958, and with whom she

laughed often, met life's challenges and wrote an enduring love story; four daughters, Maria (Wayne) Jung of Union, Ky., Elisa Arnold (David Rule) of Shiloh, Ill., Angela (Jerry) Stauder of St. Peters, Mo., and Charissa (Ryan) Steffensmeier of Belleville, Ill.; a son, Joseph (Whitney) Arnold of Louisville, Ky.; three sisters, Audrey Buchmann of Swansea, Ill., Virginia Voland of Belleville, Ill., and June (David) Larson of Princeton, Ill.; two brothers, Merle (Billie) Blim of Eugene, Ore., and Donald Blim of St. Louis, Mo.; a sister-in-law, Audrey Ann Arnold of Belleville, Ill.; a brother-in-law, Gary (Chin) Arnold of Caseyville, Ill.; and twelve grandchildren, Christopher and Lauren Jung, and Lindsie (Rob) Fransen; Kayla, Zachary and Matthew Stauder; Xavier, Tobias, Helena and Elijah Steffensmeier; and Samuel and Henry Arnold.

Joyce's journey to Heaven can be found on the website, www.amazing-joyce.com.

Special thanks to all of Joyce's private-duty caregivers - especially her primary nurse, Pauline - and other caregivers Christine, Janet and Doris, and Beverly of Heartland Hospice, each of whom immediately recognized Joyce's grace. A special thank you to her hairstylist and friend, Reggie, for his weekly house calls.

We believe that Joyce would appreciate any memorial contributions being made in her name to help sustain the memory of her beloved son, Rick. Donations to the Rick Arnold Endowed Memorial Scholarship at

Maryville University may be mailed to Maryville University, Institutional Advancement, 650 Maryville University Drive, St. Louis, Mo., 63141. Condolences may be expressed to the family online at www.rennerfh.com.

And to truly honor Joyce's spirit and example, in lieu of flowers, we encourage you to send someone a handwritten note, do something nice "just because," and treat yourself to some ice cream. Instead of store-bought gifts, Joyce preferred and treasured a note, poem, or kind gesture to others. As she once wrote, "Thank you for giving me the greatest gift of all - your love and respect."

Visitation: Friends may call from 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, March 30, 2010, at George Renner & Sons Funeral Home, Belleville, Ill.

Funeral: The Funeral Mass will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, March 31, 2010, at St. Augustine of Canterbury Church, Belleville, Ill., with the Rev. Gene Neff, the Very Rev. Jack McEvilly, and the Rev. Patrick Okwu-muo officiating. Joyce chose cremation and private burial services will be held at Lake View Memorial Gardens, Fairview Heights, Ill., at a later time.

"I don't care what time it is, call me when you're home."

You are home, Joyce. We love you.

"Over and out!"



GEORGE RENNER & SONS FUNERAL HOME, Belleville, Ill.