



## Ellen Kay Barnes

March 26, 1928 - December 16, 2018

Ellen Kay Barnes, 90 passed away at home on the Old Mission Peninsula, Traverse City, on December 16th, 2018, in the loving presence of family and caregivers. She was born at home in Detroit on March 26, 1928. She graduated from Cooley High School and later, Wayne State University, with a major in Romance languages. Ellen was a woman of many qualities: grand, gracious, independent, passionate, warm and loyal. She did modeling for ad agencies and was a hostess at auto shows. She loved music and dancing at Detroit's "Black and Tan" jazz clubs. Her job as a travel counselor at AAA on Bagley Ave in Detroit led to sixty years of marriage and travel adventures with Motor News/Michigan Living editor Leonard R. Barnes, acting as his loving wife, "Sherpa," translator and social ambassador. She was a perceptive and dedicated partner, whose people and language skills resolved many difficult situations far from home. She was an efficient household manager, and maintained a welcoming place in which to host many dinner and cocktail parties that went far into the night.

Ellen was a good neighbor and active community member in Berkley and Pleasant Ridge MI, where she was a Campfire leader for her daughter's troop. As a summer resident on Bar Road (Empire, MI) and later Port Oneida, she enjoyed walking the beaches and woods accompanied by various dogs and cats who chose her as their companion. She was a good listener, interested conversationalist and an excellent correspondent, maintaining friendships and connections across the years and around the world. She read aloud to her children long after we could read ourselves, for the love of the stories. In her final years, she enjoyed the splendor of sunrises and moonrises over the bay, reveling in the beauty of Northern Michigan that she taught her entire family to love. Feeding and watching the crows, songbirds, foxes and other wildlife was a ritual and daily pleasure shared by all who stopped to sit at her kitchen table. The family would like to thank the medical community of Traverse City and the dedicated group of caregivers who shared these joys and made it possible for Ellen to remain comfortably at home.

Ellen was predeceased by her husband of sixty years, Leonard R. Barnes in 2014. She is survived by her children Hilary Barnes (David Ortland) of Bellevue, WA, Julia Barnes of Zandaam, Netherlands, Stephen Barnes (Kathi) of Traverse City, MI, and nine granddaughters, four great-grandsons, one great-granddaughter and her two best friends

from kindergarten and second grade.

We will always remember her playing the piano and singing favorite show tunes, most poignantly Jerome Kern's: "So (we) smile and say when a lovely flame dies, /Smoke gets in your eyes."

A celebration of life will be held at a later date, when interment will take place at Maple Grove Cemetery in Elk Rapids. Contributions to Hospice of Michigan

<https://www.hom.org> or the charity of your choice in Ellen's name are welcomed.

Please visit [www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com](http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com) to share your thoughts with the family on Ellen's tribute page.

The family is being cared for by the Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home.

# Comments

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“ I would like to extend my condolences to the Barnes family. I worked with Len at Motor News (downtown Detroit) and Michigan Living (Deaborn) for many years. I always remember Ellen as a gracious woman who was a wonderful conversationalist. I really enjoyed viewing the photo album Steve posted here.

**Barb Kisch** - March 07 at 10:21 AM

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“ Message below should say I worked for Len on Michigan Living magazine. IMO, the end of another era.

**Bill Semion** - February 23 at 10:54 AM

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“ my prays go out to the Barnes family i work with Len at AAA for over twenty years i pick up and delivered packages to there house in wood Hgts my wife Kathy and myself had dinner with Len and Ellen a number of times and really had a good time when we got together. Ellen was a very classy lady send us cards on the holidays. She will be missed by everyone peace love and good vibrations

**scott renas** - February 22 at 11:38 PM

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“ I worked with Len back in the early 1990s and always enjoyed chatting with Ellen. She was a beautiful woman! My two young sons back then once ran around their TC basement while the adults enjoyed a couple tall tonics upstairs. I wonder where their next heavenly adventure may take them to share another lingering sunset capped with a couple martinis. They lived a great life when I knew them. My sympathies to the extended family.

**Ron Garbinski** - February 22 at 07:02 PM

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“ I worked for Len for e were frequent visitors at her house, when Len was there and afterward. She was always a perfect hostess and we enjoyed visiting with her and having coffee, or soup. We took her to lunch one day, and to one of Len's favorite dinner spots. I ordered prime rib, rare, as ordered. She said Len would have been proud! We will miss visiting. She loved speaking about Len, and reminiscing about Michigan Living. We'd always call and the last couple of times, she said don't come by because she was sick, or had a cold. She had a fantastic memory for where she and Len had traveled. A great life lived is the best tribute.

Bill Semion - February 22 at 06:14 PM

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“ I will never forget Ellen's graciousness in occasionally allowing my family to use her Port Oneida summer home on Lake Michigan. We have many happy memories there and have developed a real love of the area. Thank you Ellen! My condolences to all her family.

Laurie Pare

Laurel Pare - January 20 at 06:12 PM

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“ 28 files added to the album Memories Album



Stephen Barnes - January 19 at 12:41 PM

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“ We love our Aunt Ellen. She was for me one of the most influential people in my life. We love you Aunt Ellen forever!!!

Love and condolences from nephew Jamey Clark, and Tom Coffey.

P.S. Tom felt very welcomed and liked by Aunt Ellen, and considered her to be his "Aunt Ellen" also.

James J Clark - January 19 at 09:15 AM