

## Jean Ann Lada

January 31, 1936 - October 30, 2020

Jean Ann Lada, 84, passed away peacefully on Oct. 30, 2020. Jean was born Jan. 31, 1936, in Maple City, Mich. to the late Josephine (Schettek) and Gerald Lewis.

The oldest of four children, she grew up surrounded by her large extended Polish family in Maple City, in an era where everyone knew everyone and shirttail relations were the norm. She had fond memories of weekly family get-togethers at Old Settlers Park and visiting her grandma at the family farm. Although she was close with all of her elders, a couple of her aunts had a profound influence on her throughout her life: her very friendly and lovable Aunt Vernie (whose homemade cream puffs were the best) and her Aunt Mary Ellen, who was just 10 years older and like a second sister and best friend to her.

Jean mastered her cooking and baking skills from not only her aunts but also her parents. Her dad was a cook at the Traverse City State Hospital, and she'd often tell stories of him teaching her how to stuff a turkey and make a cake from scratch. Jean's sister, Dorothy, was two years younger, and her brothers, Chuck and Donny, were eight and 14 years younger, respectively. She thus had a role in raising her siblings and experience in helping to run a household from a young age, and she quickly became a natural homemaker.

When she was in elementary school, Jean moved with her sister and parents into a home on Monroe Street in Traverse City's Slabtown neighborhood. She lived in four homes within a one-mile radius in Slabtown for the next 75 years. She lived on Front Street as a teenager, graduated from Traverse City St. Francis High School in 1954, and married her high school sweetheart, Joe Lada, in 1956. The newlyweds bought a house on Cedar Street.

Even though Jean and Joe's Cedar Street house was quite small, Jean generously entertained family and friends regularly. All of the food was made from scratch and presented effortlessly, all while dressed fashionably in her signature clip-on earrings and high heels. After 17 wonderful years on Cedar Street, she and Joe had saved enough to

build a new larger home on Monroe Street—half a block away from where Jean had lived as a child.

The main thing Jean insisted on when building their Monroe Street house was a large finished basement with its own kitchen for entertaining. That basement certainly got a lot of use over the years, sometimes hosting up to 100 people at one time while the pool and ping-pong tables were used to display and serve an abundance of homemade foods and desserts, all created by Jean. It was almost like Slabtown's version of *The Beverly Hillbillies*.

On holidays, family would spend the entire afternoon and evening in the basement—sometimes long enough to pull out the leftovers and microwave them for a second meal. Jean's grandkids knew how lucky and spoiled they were with at least two desserts available at any given time, and they also learned that, if grandma was scooping a helping of food onto your plate, you needed to say, "that's enough, thank you" before you meant it, as she'd always add two more scoops after you said it. In the basement living-dining area, an artificial Christmas tree sat in the corner year-round, decorated with Beanie Babies and other ornaments for not only Christmas, but sometimes Easter, Halloween, and the Fourth of July.

Jean was in many ways the epitome of the 1950s housewife. She was an extremely hard worker and was not one to just lounge around. As a young woman, she took care of her siblings, was a babysitter for neighborhood children, worked as a waitress at Kiki's Diner during high school, and was an operator at Michigan Bell after she was married.

After having kids and being a stay-at-home mother for several years, her strong work ethic and desire to provide her family with a better life drove her to expand her role from bread maker to bread winner. One way was by becoming a Stanley home products representative. Meanwhile, at the suggestion of a friend, she took piles of her children's outgrown infant clothing to the Copemish Flea Market for resale. On this first day she sold almost everything. That was it—she was hooked! From then on, she would scour the *Record Eagle* for yard and estate sales for items she could resell, such as dishes, housewares, and various trinkets.

In fact, she and Joe were among the most well-known antiquers in the area and were regulars at the Copemish Flea Market for over 30 years. From an early age, they taught their children how to identify treasures that others might consider junk, a tradition they still carry on today, as is evident in their large collections of original Fiestaware, Heywood

Wakefield furniture, vintage Christmas items, and other antiques.

Jean was a devout Catholic and a parishioner at Immaculate Conception Church for 75 years. She was a very involved member of the church, giving her time to the Women's Club, ushering, and counting donations. In her spare time, Jean enjoyed baking, playing Bingo, and trips to the casino.

Although we've saved copies of the recipes Jean has left behind—Aunt Marlene's blueberry fruit slices, Bea Pahl's fruitcake, Mildred's "decoration" cookies, mom's oatmeal spice cake with broiled ("burnt") frosting, and her famous German chocolate cake—we know they are just not going to taste as good as when she made them. But even so, our hope is that we all might master her recipe for a happy, loving, and productive long life.

Jean is survived by her: children, Cyndi (Phillip) Belanger of Traverse City and Joe Lada (Gary Cozette) of Chicago and Maple City; grandchildren, Lydia Belanger of Brooklyn, N.Y. and Clark Belanger of Fort Wayne, Ind.; sister, Dorothy Fehrenbach; sisters-in-law, Marlene Coglianesse, Donna (Tony) Coglianesse, Loretta (Larry) Ludka, and Karyl (Tom) Kroupa; brother-in-law Don (Dee) Lada; Aunt Mary Ellen Novak; and numerous cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends. She was preceded in death by: her husband, Joseph Perry Lada, in 2019; her brothers-in-law Frank Coglianesse and Willard Fehrenbach; and her brothers, Chuck and Donald Lewis.

Mass of Christian Burial will take place at 11:00 a.m., Fri., Nov. 6, 2020, at Immaculate Conception Church of Traverse City. Visitation will begin at 10:00 a.m. and will continue until Mass begins. The family kindly requests that safe social distancing and wearing a face covering be observed.

For those unable to attend Mass, a livestream version may be viewed at [www.immaculatetc.org](http://www.immaculatetc.org). If you are unable to watch the service live, a video will be available at [www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com](http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com), for viewing at a later time. Jean will be laid to rest in Grand Traverse Memorial Gardens, at a private interment service. Condolences and memories may be shared at [www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com](http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com).

Jean loved to cook and feed people, so if you'd like to remember her, memorials may be directed to the Immaculate Conception Food Pantry, 308 N. Cedar St., Traverse City, MI, 49684.

# Comments

---



“ An external video has been added.

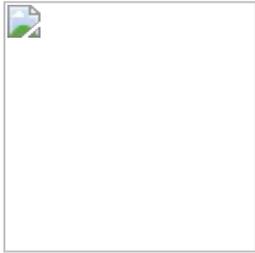


**Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home & Cremation Services** - November 06, 2020 at 08:05 AM

---



“ 1 file added to the album Mass of Christian Burial



**Reynolds Jonkhoff** - November 16, 2020 at 11:08 AM

---



“ Interment service



**Reynolds Jonkhoff** - November 13, 2020 at 04:28 PM

---



“ To Jean's family,  
Your Mother was such a graceful lady. I always enjoyed seeing her at ICC. May all those wonderful memories carry on with you in the days ahead. RIP dear Jean.

Darlene Miller



**Darlene A. Miller** - November 13, 2020 at 03:35 PM

---



“ What a wonderful video of all the years of your Mother's life. We so enjoyed it- especially the older pictures from a different time none of us knew was so special. Jean was an amazing first class lady who along with Joe started their own dynasty- borrowing from the past generations guidance. The true circle of life. The Robertson families thoughts and prayers are with all you family members. God Bless —  
Cindy Robertson

**Cindy Robertson** - November 08, 2020 at 09:03 PM

---



“ What more can be said about the Lada's? Jean and her husband Joe were so very good to me when I married into the family. My husband said that "going to their house was the best, they made you feel like you were important, and liked your company." He was right. Always an open door, a beautiful smile and something scrumptious to eat and drink. Though I never told them I didn't like Vernors. It was always hard to leave their home, there was always one more story, one more joke or one more beautiful treasure to admire. I will miss this amazing woman. God bless you Jean. My sincere condolences to the family. She will be missed.  
Barb Novak

**Barb Novak** - November 06, 2020 at 04:05 AM

---



“ Mrs. Lada was just like a grandma to me, I am very lucky to have had her in my life. She was one of the kindest people I have ever met, never forgetting a birthday or missing an important event. She will be greatly missed.

**Emily Marek** - November 05, 2020 at 09:59 PM

---



“ I Met Jean years ago through her sister Dort. I enjoyed visiting with her. Will be greatly missed

**Carol Hauser** - November 07, 2020 at 03:21 PM

---



“ So many great memories with Aunt Jean and Uncle Joe. The endless years of family celebrations in the basement. Always lots of food and laughter. I loved being with all of the aunts/uncles and cousins. Aunt Jean made the best peanut butter/hershey kiss cookies. I can remember riding my bike down to their house and the first thing I would ask is if she had any made.  
Aunt Jean and Uncle Joe were the sweetest couple. They made family a priority and showed us all unconditional love. Both are missed dearly.  
Prayers for comfort and peace.

**Heather Meteer** - November 05, 2020 at 10:44 AM

---



“ We feel blessed to have shared 50 plus years as close neighbors to Jean and Joe. We miss them, their visits and smiles every day. Due to health, age, and COVID29 issues we will be doing the virtual funeral service but we will be with you in spirit and prayer. George & Esther Gregory, 523 Monroe.

**George H Gregory** - November 04, 2020 at 11:24 AM

---



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



**Joe Lada** - November 03, 2020 at 09:07 PM



“ As a small child, my very earliest memories of my mother was "WOW:... I always thought she was so pretty...and I especially liked her signature fuchsia colored lip stick....I can still see her put it on so perfectly.

**Joe Lada** - November 03, 2020 at 09:10 PM

---



“ We Grew up together on Munroe in the 50,s she was a great person and supported her husband Joe for many years

**Herbert Lemcool** - November 02, 2020 at 08:44 AM



“ My condolences to the Lada family. They were good friends of my parents and I heard fun stories of good times shared. May you find comfort knowing that your parents have rejoined one another in heaven.

Judy Robinson

**Judy Robinsin** - November 05, 2020 at 05:57 AM

---



“ This photo was taken of my sister Jean and I on my 80th birthday in Alva FL. 2017. What a surprise it was to see her and my niece Cindy.



**Dorothy Fehrenbach** - October 31, 2020 at 08:28 PM



“ How sweet she always was! Such a sweet photo we all will truly miss her!!

**Karen Sullivan** - November 01, 2020 at 07:47 PM