



Joan Marie Bell

January 19, 1940 - April 10, 2023

Joan Marie Bell (Heldreth) passed away peacefully in her home with her loving husband Dale at her side on April 10, 2023 after a long illness. Joan was loved by all for her kindness, generosity, selflessness and humility. She found great joy in providing for her family, friends, and acquaintances. Joan was a skilled teacher, musician, vocalist, cook, gardener, vacation planner, and seamstress among many other things. She seemed to accomplish everything effortlessly, bringing great joy to those around her. She truly loved to labor for the enjoyment of others. Joan was born in Illinois and moved to Ann Arbor, MI at the age of 3, where she grew up, married, raised a family and lived most of her adult life. After retirement she and Dale moved to Suttons Bay, MI and enjoyed the beautiful surroundings and local community for many years. Joan was an active member of Memorial Christian Church in Ann Arbor and Suttons Bay Congregational Church. She enjoyed being a member of the church choirs and a soprano soloist from an early age. She also thoroughly enjoyed being in the Choral Union Choir in Ann Arbor. In high school she participated in musical theatre and played the lead in *Pirates of Penzance*. She enjoyed playing piano throughout her life, including accompanying her children during their instrumental performances. Joan grew up in a family of seamstresses and carried on that tradition in a loving way. She made matching outfits for her grandchildren and their dolls. She bought clothes and then made clothing to match for children so that they would have entire matching outfits and donated them to the Women's Resource Center.

Perhaps her greatest gift was making full-sized quilts for all her family members. We can only imagine the effort it took her to complete the last quilt for her youngest grandchild's high school graduation while her dementia was setting in, her last large quilt. Joan's love was given freely to all, but especially to children. She thoroughly enjoyed her career as an elementary teacher after receiving her Bachelor and Master degrees from the University of Michigan, which she achieved while raising two elementary-age children of her own. Joan taught early elementary education at Lawton and Thurston Elementary schools where she also met lifelong friends that she and Dale spent much of their lives enjoying activities with, like Michigan Basketball, Football, and Hockey. They had season tickets to all three. Dale's interests were largely sports related and Joan loved to be with Dale and their friends at sporting activities. Seeing, learning and teaching about the earth's natural wonders and everyday wonders was very important to Joan. She planned and took her students and family on multiple excursions every year to the enjoyment and enrichment of all. She was a bird lover, who took her class on a winter bird outing to Kensington Park every year and had numerous books and art work of birds in the house. Joan loved flowers. She made spectacular flower arrangements and had many flower gardens throughout her yard. Passersby often stopped to marvel at her gardens. She found lasting peace and enjoyment in her gardens well into her illness. The gifts Joan gave are in our hearts and our hands and will last many generations. We are all very grateful for her love and nurturing.

She was preceded in death by her parents William and Dorothy Heldreth and her sister Dorothy (Dory) Graham.

She is survived by her husband Dale Bell, children Pam (Greg) Nordhogen, Tim (Lisa) Bell, Grandchildren Christopher Nordhogen, Lauren Nordhogen, Morgan Bell and Meredith Bell.

No memorial service is planned at this time. In Lieu of flowers, we invite you to make a donation to the Women's Resource Center, 720 S. Elmwood Ste 2, Traverse City, MI 49684. Donations may also be made on their website

womensresourcecenter.org

Tribute Wall



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Joan Marie Bell.*



April 17, 2023 at 10:13 AM



“ *Joan and I met in the late 60's when my students and I were moved to the elementary building where she was teaching children in the first grade. Joan welcomed us into her life and classroom by skillfully involving our students on cross-age projects based on aspects of the curriculum and the interests of our students. Joan was fun to be around. She laughed easily and often. As our friendship developed, it frequently extended beyond the school day and often included dinner and/or activities with our families and mutual friends. Joan was an excellent cook and baker. She even made soft pretzels!*

Joan was a kind and loyal friend. I could always count on her when I needed help. It didn't matter if the help was for a sewing project or an interpersonal issue. She was always there for me and I will always be grateful to her for that.

Pat Walker - April 16, 2023 at 12:23 AM

SM

“ I first met Joan when we were sophomores at Ann Arbor High School and so began a life long friendship. In high school between sleepovers and always being welcomed by her parents to stay for dinner, her home became like a second home to me. Through the years I have been fortunate that we maintained our friendship. Her accomplishments and talents seem to exceed what one person should be able to do. She was also very kind and her family was always of the utmost importance to her. I am just grateful that she was my friend and I will miss her.

Sophia Mrozinski

Sophia Mrozinski - April 14, 2023 at 06:30 PM

RS

“ I taught with Joan for 20 years in Ann Arbor. She was a wonderful teacher who was exceptionally gifted in bringing nature and science alive for her first graders. She was also a very dear friend who loved to laugh and enjoy life. We shared a love of quilting for many years and even after she became ill she loved looking at quilts in magazines and was always planning the next quilt she planned to make. We shared personal highs and lows in our private lives and she was always supportive and caring. I cherish many precious memories of Joan and know that my life is better because she was a part of it. Ruth Spangler

Ruth A Spangler - April 12, 2023 at 09:00 PM