

Nancy Niva



Nancy's Life Story

Cooking, gardening and shopping were some of Nancy Niva's deepest passions. She prepared delightful meals, grew beautiful morning glories and found the best bargains in town.

Nancy was the second of four children born to Paul and Dora (Griffin) McDowell on July 30, 1935 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Great Depression, which began in 1929, was still making life difficult during Nancy's childhood. There just wasn't much money around for anyone, but her father had steady work at Dolar Jarvis and he was happy to be able to provide for the family. Her mother was busy at home keeping house and raising the four kids.

Nancy and her siblings, Patrick, Shirley and Barbara lived in the the family home on Grant St.SW. Later on, the family moved to 610 4th St. NW and the children attended Stocking Elementary School. Later, Nancy and her siblings went to Union High School. She stayed in school through the 10th grade and then she set out for employment. She never learned to ride a bike or how to drive a car, so the perimeter of her job search was quite small. Her first job was at Druke Games, on the west side, and later she was hired at Michigan Bulb Company.

Nancy's best friend Catherine was dating her brother Patrick, and she introduced Nancy to Ken Niva. After courting for sometime, the happy couple fell in love and decided to marry. They were joined in marriage on October 24, 1953. Nancy was eighteen and Ken

was twenty-three when they tied the knot. The young couple, anxious to begin married life, found an apartment near Valley Field on the west side. Ken worked for Grand Rapids Gravel Company and they looked forward to beginning a family when the time was right. They moved to Caufield SE and on March 28, 1955, Nancy and Ken welcomed into the world their firstborn, daughter, Jean. Nancy was proud to be a mom and Ken quickly learned what it felt like to have a baby in the home. The following year, Deborah was born on August

6, 1956. Then, on June 3, 1959, they welcomed their son Kenneth. On November 24, 1964, their family was complete with the birth of their daughter Peggy. The Niva family moved into their home at 20 National NW and the children all attended Lexington Elementary School. They later moved to 931 10th St. NW. They went on to West Middle School and then Union High School. Many fun filled summer days were enjoyed at Lincoln





and Richmond Park. Nancy's Saturdays were often spent bringing the children shopping downtown. They would go to Woolworths, Wurzburgs, Steketees and window shop at many of the other downtown stores.

Nancy was a lifetime member of the VFW Creston Post #3023 Ladies Auxilliary. There she was very active in participating in many of the post activities and events.

In 1979, Nancy's marriage to Ken came to an end. She had a job at Carbonneau Industries, which was an audio speaker manufacturer. She was grateful for the close proximity of the business because it was close enough to walk to. Later on, the company moved to Myrtle NW and she had to find rides with her co-workers. When she wasn't working, Nancy kept in close contact with her good friends, Sally, Rosalyn and Kay. The four of them loved to shop, visit and play bingo at the VFW Creston Post. Saturdays, Nancy spent garage saling with her sister Bobbie. On her many shopping trips, she would find festive clothing to wear on every holiday. Pulaski Weekend in October was always an event Nancy looked forward to. Her kids were around and always willing to drive her here and there. Although she enjoyed being out and about, Nancy could appreciate the solitude of being alone too. She enjoyed reading the newspaper, doing jig-saw puzzles and word searches, cooking favorites like biscuits and chicken or creamed beef on toast, gardening and staying in touch with her family. She had 10 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren, and they were all her pride and joy. She loved the time she had to spend with her precious grandchildren. She had an amazing memory and she never forgot to celebrate the birthday or anniversary of someone she cared about.



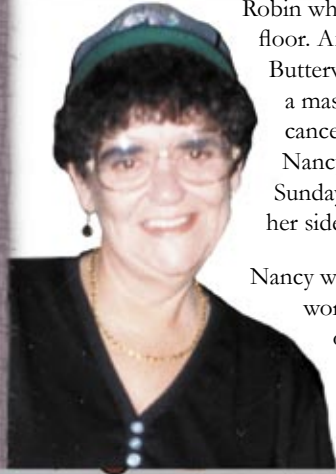
Later in life, Nancy met Russ Minnema. The two enjoyed one another's company immensely and they spent 10 years dating. Nancy and Russ took many trips together, including, Florida, Las Vegas, camping and visiting several casino's. Nancy's father died on November 5, 1976 and eight years later, her mother passed away on March 26, 1984. Her dear sister and good friend, Bobbie passed away in 2006. She leaned on her family and friends to walk beside her as she grieved the loss of her loving parent and sister. Nancy had

many good friends, neighbors and loving family members who cared greatly for her. Nancy and her friend and neighbor, Robin, checked on each other daily, and it was





Robin who found Nancy collapsed on her kitchen floor. After being transferred by ambulance to Butterworth Hospital, she was diagnosed with a massive stroke. With further research, a cancerous tumor was found on her lung and Nancy's health continued to decline. She died Sunday evening at 7:45p.m. with her family by her side.



Nancy was a creative gardener, skilled cook and hard worker. She was also a devoted and caring mother and grandmother and overall she was a loving tenderhearted woman. Nancy Lou Niva will be dearly missed by her many friends and family members.

Nancy Lou Niva, aged 71 of Grand Rapids, passed away at Spectrum Health - Butterworth Hospital on Sunday evening, February 11, 2007 following a brief illness. She was preceded in death by her sister, Barbara Warner. She is survived by her children, Jean Pecynski (Jerry Moss), Deborah and John Long, Kenneth Niva (Alice Marshall) Peggy and Mike Buskard; her 10 grandchildren, Dennis (Melissa) Pecynski, Jason Pecynski, Kimberly Pecynski, Shelly Duzan, Michael (Tara) Duzan Jr., Christopher Duzan, Kenneth Niva Jr., James Buskard, Nicholas Buskard, Amber Buskard; 10 great grandchildren; her brother Patrick McDowell; her sister, Shirley Seymour; brother-in-law, Don Warner; several nieces and nephews and many friends. A service to celebrate Nancy 's life will be held on Thursday morning at 11:00 a.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 134 N. Division Ave. Burial will be in Rosedale Cemetery. Friends and relatives may meet her family at Heritage Life Story Funeral



Home - Van't Hof Chapel, 851 Leonard St. NW on Wednesday from 2-4 and 7-9 PM. To leave your own memory of her or to sign her guest book, please visit her web page at www.lifestorynet.com.



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