

# Marilynn Sawyer

April 8, 1926 - December 3, 2011



## *Marilynn's Life Story*

When we think of Marilynn Sawyer words such as sensitive, caring, and selfless come to mind, however, it will be the way her heart beat to nurture others that will be her lasting legacy. Whether her husband, her bustling brood of children, or her patients she devoted her life to touching the hearts and lives of those around her in her own special way. With the love of her life by her side for more than 50 years, Marilynn embraced whatever life brought her through both the great joys and the deep sorrows of life. Our days will never be the same without her here, but Marilynn's memory will remain alive and well in the hearts of those too numerous to count.

Amidst the decade that became known as the Roaring Twenties was the year 1926 that boasted of several noteworthy events. This was the year that Route 66 was created, allowing people the ability to see new places within our beautiful country. Television giant NBC was launched and jazz music dominated the airwaves while prohibition was the law of the land. During this same year a young couple from Vicksburg, Michigan, was delighted to announce the birth of a healthy baby girl on April 8th. Marilynn Lois was in the middle of seven children born to her parents, Leonard and Erma (Hoch) Borton. She was raised in the family home in Vicksburg alongside her brother, Verlin, and her sisters, Ardith, Wanda, Fern, Delores, and Charlene, and she enjoyed a childhood that was rather typical for the youth of her generation.

After graduating from Vicksburg High School, Marilynn went on to Bronson School of Nursing, earning her RN certificate. With her education behind her she established a successful career that she loved. Marilynn took a position with the State Hospital where she remained for 10 years before moving on to the TB Sanitarium in Kalamazoo. With a desire to help people in a different way, she went back to school at Western Michigan University where she received her BA in social work. Soon after, Marilynn

took a position with Borgess Medical Center where she was the head of the alcoholic therapy program for many years beginning in the early seventies. She later went to work at the VA Medical Center and although





she returned to Borgess for a short time, she later returned to the VA where she remained until she retired in 1989.

While she was working toward her career, Marilynn met and married a man named William Friend, Sr. Although their marriage later ended, she was forever grateful for the three children they shared together: Mark, Susan, and William Jr.

Although she was a busy single mother who worked hard to support her family, Marilynn did enjoy getting out once in awhile. It was while at a dance at a bar that she met the man with whom she would share the best years of her life. His name was John Sawyer, and he was a young man with five boys. They hit it off right away and soon discovered that they shared many of the same passions. Deeply in love, they married on August 5, 1960. Together they raised a houseful of boys and one girl who certainly kept Marilynn on her toes when she wasn't tending to her patients. She was known for her skills

in the kitchen, and her most requested creations were her fried chicken, meat loaf, and both her apple and blueberry pies.

When she did have time to pursue her interests Marilynn made the most of it. She and John continued to enjoy the same passions. Dancing was one of their favorite activities, and they particularly enjoyed the classic country music of greats like Ernie Ford and Patsy Cline just to name a couple. Marilynn played the organ, and both she and John played the squeeze box. They always loved traveling, but enjoyed it even more so after they retired. Through the years Marilynn and John travelled from coast to coast. Since she loved to gamble, they frequently traveled to the Soaring Eagle Casino in Mount Pleasant. Later in life she and her

husband moved into a home on Pine Lake, and they settled into lakeside living immediately. Marilynn and John especially loved floating around on their pontoon boat and fishing together. Over the years she always had a special place in her heart for animals, and she deeply enjoyed the companionship of their many poodles.

Of course there was nothing that was ever more near and dear to Marilynn's heart than her family. She continued to treasure the





love she shared with her children, and she was thrilled to welcome 18 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren into their family.

As Marilyn was plagued by more health issues, she needed more care and moved to Kairos Dwelling where she later drew her last breath.

Through the life of Marilyn Sawyer we are reminded that each day is a gift to be embraced while deeply loving those within our reach. She was bubbly and outgoing, which made her so much fun to be around. A more loving and devoted wife would be hard to find and as mothers go, Marilyn was simply the best. A true caregiver at heart, Marilyn will be deeply missed while the memories she leaves behind will be a priceless treasure for generations to come.

Marilynn L. Sawyer of Pine Lake died December 3, 2011, at Kairos Dwelling. Marilyn's family includes her husband, John Sawyer, Sr.; her son, William B. (Karen) Friend, Jr.; her stepsons, Stephen Sawyer, Richard (Karen) Sawyer, Pat (Deborah) Sawyer, and Thomas (Rhonda) Sawyer; 18 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; 5 great-great-grandchildren; sisters, Fern (Everett) Denning and Delores Smith, Charlene (Wally) Mathies; brother, Verlin (Marilyn) Borton; and well a many other relatives. Marilyn was preceded in death by her children, Mark Friend and Susan Chalinski; stepson, John Sawyer; and her sisters, Ardit Middy and Wanda Buris. Visit with her family and friends and view her life story film on Tuesday from 4:00-7:00 at Life Story Funeral Home, Plainwell; 120 S. Woodhams (685-5881). A Funeral will be held on Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. at the same location. Please visit Marilyn's memory page at [www.lifestorynet.com](http://www.lifestorynet.com) where you can archive a memory or photo or sign her memory book online before coming to the funeral home. Memorial donations may be directed to Kairos Dwelling or your local Humane Society.



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