



Ruth Elaine Gandek

January 11, 2024

Ruth Elaine Gandek, age 89, of Medford Leas, NJ, formerly of Mt. Laurel, NJ, passed away peacefully on January 11, 2024. She was born on September 23, 1934, in Pawtucket, RI, to the late Albert Watson and Florence Nuttall Watson. The most important thing in the world to Ruth was her family. Wife of 53 years to Rev. Walter Gandek, who preceded her in death, Ruth is survived by her children, Lisa Shilling and husband James DeBruyne, Thomas Gandek and wife Catherine, and Nora Cummings and husband Peter. She was a proud grandmother to 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Ruth is also survived by her brother, Charles Watson and his wife Nola.

Ruth attended Oberlin College in 1952. While at Oberlin a junior counselor introduced her to Walt, who was two years ahead of her. Walt proposed to Ruth by hiding the ring in a puzzle box, writing "Life is like a puzzle... easier if two people work it together." They were married in 1954. When Walt graduated the two went to Drew University, where Ruth graduated Cum Laude in 1956 with her BA in religion and philosophy. Together, Ruth and Walt were actively involved in numerous churches across New Jersey, serving the United Methodist Churches of Wayside, Fair Haven, Tuckerton, Old Bridge, Hightstown, Freehold, Palmyra, Wenonah, and Franklinville. While serving these churches, Ruth was always active in activities such as UMW (United Methodist Women), Sunday school, and pot luck suppers, hosted many open houses with her famous selection of homemade cookies, and generally worked to make each church a welcoming place for all types of people. Most recently, Ruth was a member of the Moorestown United Methodist Church. As her children grew and became more independent, Ruth directed her energy toward building her own career, gravitating toward social work where she could positively impact the lives of people in need. She worked as Director of Welfare in East Windsor Township then as Project Director at Lakewood-Jackson Outreach for Seniors. In 1979, with 3 kids in college, Ruth returned to school at Temple University and then Rutgers University, receiving her Master's degree in Social Work Administration in 1983. Ruth then had a successful career as a nursing home administrator first at Greenbriar East Nursing Center in Deptford, NJ, then Collingswood Manor Nursing Home in Collingswood, NJ. She was highly respected for her dedication and compassion toward the residents under her care. In all her positions, she quickly gained respect of her colleagues and the loyalty of her

employees, and excelled in roles where she had to make tough calls, fix challenging problems, and deal with occasionally unhappy employees or other parties – always with patience, practicality, and competence.

During her life, Ruth was an active member of many organizations including: National Association of Social Workers, Notary Public, Association of Retired Ministers & Spouses, The Neighborhood Center in Camden, Literacy Volunteers of Burlington County (where she even helped one person prepare for and achieve citizenship), National Continuing Care Residents Association, and American College of HealthCare Administrators.

Throughout her life volunteering her time was important to Ruth; this continued in her later years as she knitted hundreds of hats that were donated to hospitals for newborns and made peanut butter sandwiches for Cathedral Kitchen in Camden.

Private services and interment were held in Colestown Cemetery, Cherry Hill, NJ.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to either the Medford Leas Educational Assistance Fund, which supports early career development for the employees of Medford Leas where Ruth was provided such good care in her final years, mail contributions to Educational Assistance Fund, One Medford Leas Way, Medford, NJ 08055); or to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (www.alzfdn.org/donate/).

Cemetery Details

Colestown Cemetery

Kings Highway
Cherry Hill, NJ

Tribute Wall

CW

“ *Ruth was the best big sister a boy could have. Much love, Charlie Nola*

Charlie Watson - February 01, 2024 at 06:53 PM

SB

“ *I have joy in my heart remembering this dear lady, Ruth Elaine Gandek. Again, to her family, my sincere condolences to you all. Thank you Lisa for sending me the notice of her passing in Heaven. I also remember going to visit her a couple of times when she lived not far from Wiley Christian Retirement Community. Suzanne Bialoskurski at 11:01 am on February 1, 2024.*

Suzanne Bialoskurski - February 01, 2024 at 11:03 AM

CC

“ *So sorry to learn of Ruth's passing. She was a wonderful loving person and very active in the Franklinville United Methodist Church during Walt's service to our Church. May her family find peace knowing she is in God's loving hands. Carol Coulbourn, Lay Leader Franklinville United Methodist Church*

carol coulbourn - January 23, 2024 at 01:01 PM

SM

Sending condolences to you and your family. I enjoyed Ruth at FMC Moorestown. I did not send Christmas cards this year. I always enjoyed her cards. My husband passed away May 22, 2023. I have a full time Aide living with me. Memories are precious. I remember celebrating our 50th Anniversary year with Berners as your Mom hosting us. Sue Mitchell 🏡

Suzanne Mitchell - January 31, 2024 at 12:34 PM

SM

Sending my condolences to The Gandek family. She was a great friend at FMC Moorestown. Ruth always had a smile on her face when you greeted her, Prayers for her family during this difficult time.

Suzanne Mirchell - January 31, 2024 at 02:00 PM

SB

I remember Ruth Gandek. I worked at Collingswood Manor (United Methodist Homes of New Jersey) for many years, before retiring. My position was Executive Secretary and dear Ruth was in charge. I sent her Christmas cards each year. I do remember her say Enjoy Life. It's a gift. Unwrap it with Gratitude and Love. I have tears in my eyes, but joy in my heart remembering this dear lady. And my condolences to her family. God Bless. Suzanne Bialoskurski at 10:25 pm today

Suzanne Bialoskurski - February 01, 2024 at 10:23 AM

SB

I will never forget dear Ruth. And my mother's name was Ruth also.

Suzanne Bialoskurski - February 01, 2024 at 10:28 AM