



Wanda "Dee Dee" Johnson

February 24, 1945 - November 5, 2022

Wanda "Dee Dee" Marleah (Grew) Johnson, age 77, of Mackinaw City, Michigan, died at home on November 5, 2022, after a very short battle with gastric cancer, with family by her side. She was born in Lansing, Michigan, on February 24, 1945, to William "Bill" Richard and Wanda Marleah (Cole) Grew.

Dee Dee grew up in Lansing and graduated from J.W. Sexton High School. She attended Lansing Community College briefly, where she contemplated pursuing a psychology career or following her dream of becoming an archeologist. However, becoming a mom and starting a family became her calling. When her youngest child started school, she went to work for Dart National Bank in Holt, Michigan, for five years. In 1986, she started working at Michigan State University's School of Journalism as their Graduate Studies Secretary for nineteen years before retiring in 2005. In retirement, she would call Mackinaw City home.

Growing up, Dee Dee cherished listening to her father play boogie-woogie on the piano while drifting off to sleep, nightly. While her family was everything to her, and she enjoyed their travels and adventures, her favorite place to be was out in Shaftsbury, Michigan, on her grandma and grandpa's farm. A place of pure joy, laughter, fun, and shenanigans with her cousins, Dee Dee made memories that lasted her lifetime. Her greatest love was family, especially her children and grandchildren. Dee Dee had a giant, kind heart that embraced a

lot of people as her own family. It was an unspoken rule that if she knew someone was going to be alone for holidays, they were invited, and expected, to attend family meals and gatherings. Over the years she had an impact on many people in this way and to which they are forever grateful for her kindness and generosity.

Whether singing with her dad, in her youth choir, flying down the highway or just in her living room with her kids, Dee Dee loved music. It was integral in her life. She also loved fast muscle cars and appreciated the work that went into them. Not many people knew that one of her passions was also boxing; she loved a good boxing match. Dee Dee cherished the time she had with her loved ones, even if it meant her house became full of crazy, raucous people coming together over good food and fun stories. She wholeheartedly cherished her grandbabies, honorary and biological alike, and reveled in their joy and laughter.

Dee Dee was known for her sewing and hand-stitching hobbies. She even made her daughters' and daughter-in-law's wedding dresses. She delighted in spending time with her friends; playing cards, sipping beverages, or just talking about life. In retirement, Dee Dee relished the absence of a daily grind. She settled into hosting friends traveling through, attending her grandchildren's performances, solving crossword puzzles, enjoying television programming that taught her everything from home repair DIY to forensic analysis, traveling to see family, as well as simply existing with her companion pets.

Dee Dee will forever be remembered for her infectious smile, her raucous laughter, her bawdy disposition, and her penchant for good trouble. A quote that she wore with pride was, "Well Behaved Women Rarely Make History".

Dee Dee is survived by her daughters, Kristin (Suzie von B. & Ethan H.) Grew

of Wisconsin, and Serena (John) Lake of Alanson, Michigan; son, Aaron (Dawn) Conlin of Webberville, Michigan; as well as her embraced children, Pat (Veronica Putman) Scott, Stuart (Arlyn) King, Amy Decker, and Grace (Kelli) Dingo; and grandchildren, Shannon (Austen Tomlinson) Conlin, William Conlin, Henry Lake, and Erin Lake; as well as Tilson, Kayden, and Bryson; and countless “honorary” children and grandchildren who knew her as mom or Grandma/Aunt Dee Dee.

She is also survived by her closest and best friends, Cindy Duling and Irene Crandell; and her rekindled love, John Volz.

Dee Dee is preceded in death by her parents, William and Wanda Grew; and her twin sister, Juanita “Nonnie” Kay Grew.

Per Dee Dee’s wishes, no public services will be held at this time.

Dee Dee had a soft spot for animals. She loved her own pets as children. She also adored horses. In lieu of flowers, the family asks for people to seek out their local animal shelter/sanctuary or horse sanctuary and make a donation in her name.

Galer Funeral Home & Cremation in Pickford, Michigan, is serving the family. Condolences may be sent to the family at www.galerfuneralhomes.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Wanda "Dee Dee" Johnson*

October 05, 2023 at 09:54 AM



“ *Wanda "Dee Dee" Johnson*

October 02, 2023 at 10:14 PM



“ *I had the privilege to be with Dee Dee for a short time, we laughed, she always shared some memories of her family and how much she loved each one and how thankful she was for each of them. She gave history of Mackinaw City and parts of the Island. And how much she loved her beloved dogs Lady Hawk and Bear. May you her family and friends know that you were always number one in her heart. RIP DeeDee I will forever miss you*

Theresa - December 12, 2022 at 08:10 PM

SL

“ *Dee Dee loved her graduate students and the love was returned. Whether it was solving a problem with bureaucratic paper work or just listening to their problems, Dee Dee's office was a haven for the master's and doctoral students in the MSU School of Journalism. It was my honor to work with her for a number of years as director of the graduate program and director of the J-School. She made my life much easier. She always started my day with a smile. Like so many people who work outside the academic spotlight, her contributions will never be truly understood except by the hundreds of students she helped along their ways.*

Thank you, Dee Dee.

Steve Lacy

Steve Lacy - November 22, 2022 at 10:13 AM

MM

“ *My memory of Dee Dee is from when we stopped by while on lunch during work. She welcomed us in for a quick rest room break and water refill. She joyously filled us in on why some small trees were down in the front yard....she had a mini chainsaw and was not afraid to use it!!*

Mary Moorman - November 15, 2022 at 11:03 AM