



## Tillie A. Nelson

January 4, 1934 - April 22, 2021

Tillie Ann Nelson of Royal Oak age 87 passed away April 22, 2021 after valiantly coping with several health issues for years. Tillie was born in Murphysboro, Illinois on January 4, 1934 to Lillian (Kaiser) and Charles Travis. Surviving are her husband of 43 years David A. Nelson, daughter Amanda Butler Slade (Scott) of Tiburon, CA, son David G. Butler (Karen) of Kingwood, TX; grandchildren Stephen Butler (Kayla) of Austin, TX, Casey Butler of Austin, and Benjamin Butler of Kingwood. Also surviving are step son Scott Nelson of Kalkaska, MI, step son Neil Nelson (Juli) of Northville, MI, and step daughter Melissa Nelson Richardson (Jeff) of Commerce, MI. Surviving children of the Nelson/Richardson families who will miss "Grandma Tillie" include Zach, Ryan, and Kayla Nelson; plus Kate Richardson Purpura (Scott) of Milford, MI, and Anna Richardson. Tillie was predeceased by her only sibling; sister C. Claire Mittendorf of Beverly Hills, MI who died in 2002.

Her given name, Tillie, was a source of questions when initially meeting people; some would ask if it was a nickname for Matilda. Others would recall the bygone comic strip Tillie the Toiler at which our Tillie would visibly bristle despite the apt description of comic Tillie as a stylish working girl, attractive brunette, and secretary fit the real Tillie to a "T". She cringed when people wrote her name as Tilly, an unfortunate phonetic equal. Tillie was actually named for a Grandmother whose name in Hebrew was Teelah.

As Tillie emerged from her formative years of living in Illinois, Wisconsin, and several towns in Iowa, she possessed a mid-western work ethic and values that shaped her life; hard working, task oriented, sometimes impatient ... always willing to fill a void helping out whenever possible. Her love and loyalty to family was very strong with much caring and support for her husband, children, and grandchildren over the years.

Tillie graduated from East High School, Sioux City, Iowa in 1952 and for 2 years attended Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls (now the University of Northern Iowa) where she met and later married James Douglas Butler in 1955. They moved to E. Lansing, MI in the early 60's as Doug pursued a graduate degree from MSU; then settled in Royal Oak

and later Berkley. Tillie put her own education on hold during these periods by working in Iowa for 2 years prior to marriage and in E. Lansing while raising 2 young children. Eventually Tillie had the opportunity in the late 60's to continue college and earned a Degree in Education from Wayne State University in 1970 while achieving Dean's List honors as Class Valedictorian.

By this time the marriage to Doug had run its course, Tillie was living in Farmington Hills and considering moving to Texas; then met David Nelson at a church social group in 1977. They married in 1978 and combined households in Royal Oak where they have lived for the last 43 years.

Her professional career began with Vlasic Foods in a Sales Administration position through 1983. Opportunity knocked again as she and 3 partners opened a shared office facility in Toledo early 1984. This was an emerging business model that did well in the Detroit area, but was not accepted in Toledo. After a year it closed but Tillie landed on her feet as usual, by accepting an Office Manager position with Eaton Corp/Cutler Hammer from which she retired in 1990.

Tillie enjoyed being with people and led a busy social life throughout high school, her early college years, and in the Royal Oak area. She was an active member of the Newcomers Organization, the RO Women's Club, RO Golf Course, and the Bridge Connection as well as 4 social bridge groups. She loved bridge, attained the rank of Junior Master in 1987, and would have easily garnered sufficient points for a Golden Age Master Award had she been able to continue competitive play.

Travel was a rewarding aspect of Tillie's life; she and David did so extensively from the late 1980's until 2018. They joined the Nomads Travel Club in 2004 and, on their maiden trip, flew Around the World in 4 weeks. This was followed by other trips; some with Nomads, some with good friends, to Europe, Russia, and the Persian Gulf interspersed with major trips to Australia/New Zealand, Scandinavia, South America and South Africa. Tillie and David also enjoyed a time share in Mexico beginning in 1999 and spent 3 weeks in Cabo San Lucas during Michigan winters until 2018. Caribbean Islands during the 80's and 90's were also on Tillie's travel list for winter respite.

The First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak held a special place in Tillie's heart as that was where her children attended through high school, and where she and David found each other leading to their wedding in the chapel. Tillie was active within the congregation and served at various times as the Wedding Coordinator, Deacon, and Trustee. The church knew they could count on Tillie when help was needed.

In 2005, she initiated the church's support of Operation Paperback. This is an outreach program involving the collection and shipping of books to active and veteran military personnel/families anywhere in the world. Tillie coordinated this effort for 14 years; always grateful for the thousands of books donated by church members and the consistent support by the Mission and Library Committees.

Tillie loved life and had many interests; she was partial to dogs and always had one; she rooted hard (sometimes to a fault) for the Detroit Lions, loved the Pistons "Bad Boys" and "Goin' to Work" Eras, and was an avid cheer leader for the MSU Basketball Program. Gardening, reading, bowling, golf, theater, and staying in touch with family and friends were always on her agenda. As a quintessential homemaker of many skills, she enjoyed cooking, but especially baking pies and cookies; friends and family especially looked forward to receiving a plate of Tillie's Christmas cookies. During her peak years of activity she was hard to keep up with; places to go, things to do!! Much of this activity ceased, or became curtailed, as her health deteriorated beginning in 2015. She lived life to the fullest, loved and been loved; she will be greatly missed by her family, many friends, and one sweet little cockapoo named Molly.

Visitation Tuesday, April 27, 2021 from 9:00 AM to Noon followed by a memorial service at Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral Home, 705 W 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak, MI . The memorial service will be live streamed at <http://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com> (link: <https://www.sullivanfuneraldirectors.com/obituaries/Tillie-Nelson/#!/PhotosVideos> ). Final resting place is the Columbarium at the First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak where a private family Inurnment service is planned.

In lieu of flowers, memorials to the First Presbyterian Church RO are appreciated, designated to either the Library Committee for Operation Paperback or the Music Program under Joseph Jackson. Church address is: 529 Hendrie Blvd, Royal Oak, Michigan 48067.



# Comments

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“ A webcast video has been added.



**Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Directors** - April 27 at 09:30 AM

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“ Sitting in the sun , at my moms condo association pool, talking and laughing. I'll fondly remember her conversation and laughter. She is already missed.

**jennifer McHugh** - April 27 at 07:43 AM

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“ Bobbie and Bill McKerley purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Tillie A. Nelson.



**Bobbie and Bill McKerley** - April 26 at 04:05 PM