



Donna J. Szczerbiak

July 28, 2021

(nee Blattner) Donna peacefully joined our heavenly father in Eternal Life on July 28, 2021, at the age of 71 years. She is now reunited with her son Nicholas and parents Ben and Jean (Blattner).

Donna was a devoted wife, mother, daughter, and sister, who exemplified her faith in life. She is survived by Doug, her devoted and loving husband of 49 years, siblings Bernie (Judy), Lynn (Chuck), Joan (Steve), Jill (Dwight), Sandy (Bob), and sister-in-law Lynn. A loving aunt, Donna is also survived by her thirteen nieces and nephews: Chris (Jenni), Michelle (Jason), Nicole (Eric), Christy (Allen), Stephanie (Jake), Sarah (Adam), Dan, Kyle, Casey (Tiffany), Andrew (Hope), Tori, Stephen, and thirteen great nieces and great nephews.

Donna lived her faith throughout her career by working for the Catholic Church at St. Hyacinth parish for 16 years, St. Francis Seminary, and later retired from St. Veronica Parish. She was an active member of the Christian Women Organization and Vice President of the Senior Citizens Club at St. Rafael the Archangel Catholic Church.

Visitation Tuesday, August 3 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM at BLESSED SACRAMENT CHURCH (3100 S. 41st Street, Milwaukee) followed by the celebration of Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 AM. Private cremation will follow with inurnment at St. Adalbert Cemetery.

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 3. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Blessed Sacrament Church
3100 S. 41st Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215

Mass of Christian Burial

AUG 3. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Blessed Sacrament Church
3100 S. 41st Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215

Tribute Wall



“ *Eulogy*
By Lynn Purpero

We gather this morning to celebrate the life of Donna Jean Szczerbiak, who many of you knew throughout her life in her many traditional roles as daughter, sister and babysitter, wife, mother, Godmother, Niece, Sister-in Law, Cousin, Aunt, Great Aunt, coworker and Friend.

Faithful, loving, fun-loving, kind-hearted and proper, are just a few adjectives that describe Donna.

As her self-proclaimed favorite sister, please allow me to take a few minutes to share what it meant to me to be Donna's sister and how that relationship (and the way that we addressed Donna) changed as we grew older. Our Mother, Jean, once told me that she purposely gave her daughters names that couldn't be shortened or changed into nicknames. We found a way around that.

As the eldest of six Catholic children growing up in the 50s and 60s, a major part of Donna's role included behaving properly and setting a good example for her siblings. She was very good at her job. Donna was a rule-follower who may (or may not) have been referred to as "Saint Donna" when her exemplary behavior was pointed out as an example to her less than well-behaved siblings. In my early to mid-teens, Donna brought Douglas J. Szczerbiak into our lives and was thereafter known as the managing partner in the institution known as Donna and Doug. It is said as almost one word. Did you talk to Donna and Doug? Have you seen Donna and Doug? When are Donna and Doug getting here? You get the idea. The team was also known as the DJS (for Donna Jean and Douglas James), the Szczerbiaks and, more affectionately, just the Pollacks. Donna and Doug loved having family and friends over to celebrate Easter and Christmas dinner, and graciously always welcomed anyone who wanted to come to join the celebration. One year, there were so many people that they had to bring down a table from upstairs. There weren't enough chairs, so they used the coffee table

for bench-style seating. It looked like a large “T” stretching the entire length of the dining room and into the living room. In later years, Aunt Donna was often encouraged to go relax with her guests in the living room, which was just a nice way of telling her that she was getting in the way just a little bit.

In addition to visiting, laughing and telling stories with their guests, these dinners provided Donna with the opportunity to enjoy one of her favorite activities. Playing cards. Donna absolutely LOVED playing cards. Traditionally, the adults who knew how played Sheepshead before dinner and then everyone, including the children, played Polish Poker after dinner. As the Sheepshead players dwindled, Polish Poker reigned supreme. Everyone knew to bring a bag of quarters along anytime they were going to Donna and Doug’s for Easter or Christmas.

Donna and Doug also introduced me to my future husband, but following Donna’s example, all has been forgiven. It was said husband who coined the nickname Donna, Donna. Absolutely no one, including him, knows why or how he came up with that one, but it is still in use today.

Throughout her life’s relationships, Donna never forgot her Catholic faith and really took it to heart in her professional life. After taking time off to start a family, Donna’s first job after their son, Nick, went to school was working as a volunteer in the library at St. Hyacinth Church. That went so well that she spent the next 16 plus years there as the combination Parish Secretary and Chief Priest Wrangler to Fathers Police and Bruno, Auxiliary Bishop Richard Skilba and, oh yes, Father Ron Kotecki, who was the one who hired her.

She took a break from parish life for a few years and worked at the St Francis de Sales Seminary before finishing her career as Administrative Assistant to Father Mark Payne at St. Veronica’s. Her vast knowledge and experience of all things “Catholic” made her the perfect contact (PRE GOOGLE) for questions like “What are the Lentin regulations again?” “What do we need to do to get our child

baptized, and how much should we pay the priest?" We (or at least I) sought advice from capital "S" Sister Donna on such matters.

For most of her adult life, Donna did not drive. For years, our Mother would abandon our dad once a week to go have dinner with Donna and Doug, after which Mom would take Donna shopping to Walgreens at Southgate Mall and return to their house for a rousing evening of jigsaw puzzling. This weekly tradition became known as "Puzzle Night". Some years in, I invited myself to puzzle night and joined them once their shopping was complete. Doug would go hangout with the guys and the ladies enjoyed a nice evening of "puzzling" and visiting. At some point, I started going over for dinner and puzzling, and we recently determined that I was lucky enough to visit with my sister, Donna, Donna, (and freeload an awesome home-cooked dinner) almost every week for over 17 years. It was endearing to watch Donna meticulously measure the ingredients and follow a recipe that she had been making for decades. For the record, my favorite dinner was "Killer Pork Chops".

During some visits, Donna invited me to go to some of the Christian Women's functions with her at St. Raphael the Archangel and gently encouraged me to join their organization. Although I never officially joined their group, she managed to get me involved anyway by driving her the two blocks from her house to the church cafeteria to attend their scheduled meetings. Clever girl.

With the births of numerous nieces and nephews, Donna and Doug gave way to Aunt Donna, Auntie Donna, and, as my children dubbed her, ADJ for Aunt Donna Jean.

Then the great nieces and nephews arrived. The first batch of them lived mostly out of town, but Donna looked forward to babysitting and playing with them when possible. Donna absolutely loved playing and laughing with her great nephews, my grandsons, who brought her full circle back to Donna and Doug. Except now, it became Auntie Donna (and Uncle Doug). Just like with Donna and Doug, Ben does not allow me to say just Auntie Donna. When I do,

he always adds, "and Uncle Doug".

My youngest grandson, Dominic, only visited a few times before the pandemic, but Ben had many opportunities visit and play with Auntie Donna (and Uncle Doug). Each visit, she came out of the house calling, "Where's my Ben?" and he would respond, "Right here!" from the back seat. She kept calling until she got to the car, while Ben scrambled across the back seat to reach the sidewalk side and Auntie Donna. She would get down on the floor and chase cat balls with him, dance and run around the living room and then make him mac & cheese for lunch or some special leftover meal she knew he liked.

In fall, they put up Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations. In winter, they gingerly sorted through Christmas ornaments, hung decorations and discussed all of the visitors and animals around the Crèche as they set it up (with Uncle Doug, of course, but minus Baby Jesus). In summer, they played in the sandbox and did gardening. She taught him how to pull weeds and pick vegetables and thought it was hysterical when she taught a 2 year old how to say "succotash".

These are only some of my stories about my sister, Donna, and I know that everyone here has their own stories and memories of Donna.

And so we ask of you that in remembering Donna, you also remember how you worked with her; how you played with her; how you laughed with her; and how you prayed with her.

Sandy Wesp - August 03, 2021 at 09:52 PM

ML

“ Donna was my very good coffee klatch friend. Being neighbors for many years, volunteering at St. Hyacinth's while Nick and Becky were in school, attending PTO meetings, Candid Tap Social Club doings and picnics, and Holiday Folk Fair watching Nick dance, and many more. When we moved we didn't see each other as often but it always was easy to catch up with, and talk. I cherish our friendship and memories, and Dick, myself and our family send hugs and sympathy to Doug and the rest of Donna's family.

Marie Loreck - August 02, 2021 at 05:42 PM

SR

“ Stephen Reske purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Donna J. Szczerbiak.



Stephen Reske - August 02, 2021 at 11:04 AM



“ Love's Journey was purchased for the family of Donna J. Szczerbiak.



August 01, 2021 at 05:01 PM

JW

“ Donna was a loving Christian woman, so welcoming and caring... and fun too. I meet her shortly after her husband, Doug, befriended my husband, John, at work. I recall an instant kinship. Before I knew it, we were invited for Easter dinner. And what a dinner it was. The family and the laughter, the amazing food – ham gravy? Who knew? (Donna and her crew that’s who and they make it best.) As time passed, I learned of her strong faith and the hardships she endured. A challenging life at times, but she always stood tall. What a lady she was. Proud of her family, her heritage, her faith. We enjoyed many good times together and lots of laughter. Times I cherish, a friendship I hold dear. I will miss her friendly smile and her genuine, sincere heart. There are no words to express the sadness we feel for Doug and all of Donna’s family and friends. She was an amazing human being. Please know that John and I share in your grief.

John and Jennifer Weber - July 31, 2021 at 07:36 PM

BG

“ Brenda & Russ Warner/Lynn & Bob Griffin purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Donna J. Szczerbiak.



Brenda & Russ Warner/Lynn & Bob Griffin - July 31, 2021 at 05:47 PM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donna J. Szczerbiak.



July 31, 2021 at 05:26 PM



“ *Guiding Light Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donna J. Szczerbiak.*



July 30, 2021 at 05:45 PM