



Harriet Elise McDermott

February 12, 1936 - June 21, 2025

Harriet Elise McDermott, 89, of Sarasota, Florida, died at home on Saturday, June 21, 2025, surrounded by her husband of 67 years, Jerry Lee McDermott, and her three sons, Jerry K. McDermott (Malinda), Jeff McDermott (Sue), and Will McDermott (Daneen).

Harriet, the eldest of six children, was born in Westlake, Ohio, on February 12, 1936, to Nelson and Elsa Zuber. She is survived by her three sisters, Annette Urban, Terri Clark, and Michelle Sedlak. Harriet is predeceased by her parents as well as her two brothers, Neil Zuber and Karl Zuber.

Harriet attended Westlake High School, which was when she met her future husband, Jerry, who was the co-captain of the Bay Village football team — Westlake's biggest rival. They began dating on New Years Eve, December 31, 1950, when they were just 14 years old, but a big Bay Village win during their senior year almost derailed their nearly 75-year love story.

Harriet and Jerry married in August of 1957. During their honeymoon to New York City, Jerry and Harriet appeared on the Big Payoff, a live game show, where Harriet won a complete wardrobe of new clothes. After a short time living in San Antonio Texas, where Jerry served in the U.S. Army, they settled in Cleveland, Ohio. Over the years, while raising her three boys, Harriet worked with Welcome Wagon, served several stints as an assistant librarian

at local schools, and served as a counselor at Friendly Town, a summer camp for children of underserved areas in Cleveland.

In addition to her numerous community activities, Harriet attended all of her boys' sporting events, band concerts, marching band competitions, plays, and musicals. She was their biggest and most vocal fan. She also went on annual fishing trips to Ontario, Canada for many years with the family, where Harriet always caught the biggest fish, including a 10-pound Northern Pike.

After following Jerry through two corporate transfers from Ohio to Syracuse, New York, and then to Fort Wayne, Indiana, Harriet studied to become a Real Estate agent. Three years later, Jerry left the corporate world to follow Harriet into Real Estate. This began a successful 23-year career together as they became the first husband-and-wife real estate team in Fort Wayne as well as two of the premier agents in the region. In 1985, Harriet and Jerry co-chaired the first three-day state Real Estate convention held in Fort Wayne.

After moving from Fort Wayne to live full-time at their cottage on Big Long Lake, which they had renovated to be a full-time residence, Harriet and Jerry eventually retired to Florida, where they have lived for the past 22 years. In between trips to Indiana, Arizona, and Seattle to visit their three son, plus notable trips to Alaska, Hawaii, Mexico, Europe, and Australia, Harriet was an active member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School, where she served as an elder and began pancake breakfasts with Jerry to raise money for charity.

In addition, during retirement, Harriet served on the grounds committee at Strathmore Riverside Villas, the community where she and Jerry lived. She also put together the monthly Strathmore community newsletter for several years and maintained the Strathmore lending library for twelve years.

In addition to her husband, sisters, and sons, Harriet is survived by seven grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, five step-grandchildren, three step-great-grandchildren, one step-great-great-grandchild, and her beloved cat, Boots.

The family will be holding a private Celebration of Life.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests friends and family make donations to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church and School, 5659 Honore Avenue, Sarasota, Florida 34233, or Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 10275 E. 550 South, Hudson, Indiana 46747.

“And He will raise you up on eagles’ wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of His hand.”
– On Eagle’s Wings by Michael Joncas

Tribute Wall

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“*Harriet & Jerry were great Purdue fans. They were fun to tailgate with when Jeff and I began our lifelong friendship as roommates there. They wore matching Black & Gold striped shirts and were thereafter referred to as “The Bumblebees.” Everyone has friends with special parents. Harriet was among the best and very loved by all. I feel blessed to have known her and all of Derm’s family. RIP*”

Jay Smith - June 24, 2025 at 11:16 AM