



Mrs. Corinne Pierce Kiluk

February 6, 1925 - May 23, 2013

Corinne Pierce Kiluk, 61 Dodge Avenue, Pittsfield

Corinne was born February 6th, in the midst of the roaring twenties in Springfield, Massachusetts to George and Amelia Pierce. One of her earliest memories of childhood was the 1936 flood which swept the Connecticut River Valley and devastated parts of Springfield. She distinctly remembered the flood waters and her family fleeing in a small rowboat in their nightclothes. She heroically ran back to the house with the water nipping at her heels, to open the basement door so her cats could escape.

Corinne attended Regis College for her undergraduate years and used her love and knowledge of music to direct the Glee Club at Boston's Symphony Hall; essentially sharing the podium with Arthur Fiedler. She stayed in touch with many of the women in her classes over the years, attending alumni events whenever she could. She received her Masters in Education from Springfield College; her first teaching job was in a two-classroom country school where she and the other teacher took turns checking each other's hair for nits.

She married Mitchell V Kiluk in 1956 and they moved to Pittsfield. Her first job in Berkshire County was at WBRK where some listeners might remember her as Merry Holiday. Raising children took precedence for a few years and

Corinne was a whirlwind of a mother; holding the center against the horses, dogs, cats, gerbils, hamsters and turtles who infiltrated daily life with the children. She organized beach trips for the family and grew to love the Ocean Park, Maine area for its protected waters and long, sandy walks. She enjoyed company and loved large dinner parties with many friends, lots of family and a Stinger or two. She couldn't stand the thought of a person spending holidays alone and she always invited folk who were far from their own home for Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations.

She loved babies and would spend hours holding her grandchildren when they were small. She helped the children raise a fledging robin they called Chirp-Chirp, who flew away and now her descendants visit every year, clambering over the grape vine that Corinne made her famous grape jelly from.

As the children began to grow up she joined the Pittsfield Public School System as a Guidance Counsellor, first on a part-time basis and then full-time at South Junior High. Corinne's teaching colleagues have said that she helped a lot of children in her career and that children would come back to school to talk to her and fill her in on their lives. Known for her generous spirit, she took action and provided clothing for children in need out of her own pocket.

At the age of 55 Corinne began taking drama lessons at the YMCA with Bonnie Gable and she called theatre "a whole new world of marvellous experiences." Joining the YMCA Lunch Time Theatre launched her way into community and repertory theatre where she won parts for shows put on by the New Phoenix Players, Town Players of Pittsfield, The Island Players (St Simons, Georgia), Bonnie Gable's Dinner Theatre, Berkshire Theatre Festival and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Her theatre life began with a terrific community production of 'Butterflies Are Free' and went on to include 'Deathtrap', 'Amphytrion' at Berkshire Theatre Festival, 'Auntie Mame', 'Guys

and Dolls', 'Inherit the Wind', and 'Counselor at Law'. She was thrilled to be part of the same cast of 'Our Town' as James Whitmore and directed by Peter Hunt. Her greatest theatrical challenge was the role of inmate in the production 'Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charen'. Healing from a car accident that left her with five broken ribs she took on the very physical role that included rough crowd scenes and constant improvisational movement as the other 'inmates' hurled themselves and body checked each other about the stage. Although she was in pain for every performance and afraid of injuring herself even more she dug deep and finished the run with her show must go on attitude.

2004 saw her theatrical career culminate in the leading role of 'A Talent for Murder' for the St Simons Island Players. She admitted to being 79 and found carrying the show just a bit much; her wry comment was that she learned a valuable lesson about getting what you wish for.

Retirement kept Corinne as busy as ever; she took up reading the newspaper for the Vision Impaired. Generous with her time, she also helped out in the soup kitchen at St Steven's church. She enjoyed reading and writing poetry and attending poetry group at the Ralph Froio Senior Center. She was a marvellous reader with a deep, theatrical voice and thrilled her children and grandchildren with recitations of 'Little Orphan Annie' and 'Dangerous Dan McGrew'.

Corinne led a full life; besides enjoying the chaos of a large family she had her own hobbies. She had enjoyed riding horses since she was young but didn't learn to jump until she was an older rider in her 50's. She swam everywhere she went; from the frigid waters of PEI and Maine to the shark infested waters off St Simon's. She had been a regular swimmer at the Pittsfield YMCA until her last years. She played the piano in the afternoons, alternating between

classical and contemporary music. She enjoyed listening to opera and attempted to instill the same love in her children by playing Puccini and encouraging them to vacuum the house on Saturday mornings. For some reason they didn't develop the deep devotion to opera that she had.

Corinne enjoyed the splendor of the Berkshires from Mt Greylock to October Mountain State Forest and she took pleasure in all that was offered whether nature or arts related. She was a fierce advocate of Berkshire County and all the activities available. A regular museum visitor she could be found anywhere from Mass MOCA to Norman Rockwell, children and grandchildren trailing in her wake. One of her neighbors complained about being bored and Corinne advised that

continued...

2

Next

...continued

"she didn't avail herself to all the opportunities Berkshire County had to offer." Corinne enjoyed the process of making art and sent hand-drawn Christmas cards to everyone on her list. She loved making all-occasion cards too. Her friend George said "she lived more lives than anyone else he knew."

She will be missed very much by her devoted children; Susan who was her most excellent care-giver and with whom she shared her home, Michelle who quietly but intelligently navigated the medical system on her behalf and Karen, Kathy, Donna and Mitchell. Their partners in life; Kevin, Nicol, David and daughter in-law, Laura. Innumerable family and friends have shared stories of Mom for which we are grateful.

She will be missed by her much cherished grandchildren, Denielle, Eric, Olin, Katie, Mitchell, Abigail and Max, and great-grandchildren Cullen and Michalee. She was predeceased by husband Mitchell, sister Georgia Phil and brother Ted Pierce, and like them will be forever in our hearts.

Previous

1

2

Tribute Wall

LC

“ *What a lovely tribute for a lovely woman. I remember your Mom with a smile and a twinkle in her eye, like she knew something we didn't, or even worse, what we were up to and didn't want her to know. Always kind, never judging.*

*Thinking of you all and keeping you in my prayers,
Linda Castro*

Linda Castro - April 25, 2014 at 12:29 PM

CR

“ *Just a note to say Mrs. Kiluk will be sadly missed. My guidance counselor and a personal acquaintance, she was always a pleasure to see and speak with. A women with a lot of wisdom to offer. My condolences to her family.*

cynthia rocca - April 25, 2014 at 12:29 PM

OL

“ *My grandmother was very thoughtful to get me one of my best skateboards. Every time I ride it I think of her. We will miss you.*

Olin - April 25, 2014 at 12:29 PM

DM

“ *I was fortunate to have Corinne as a wonderful mother in law and loving and devoted grandmother to our son Olin. We will always remember her wide smile, infectious laugh, big heart, and, of course, her ratatoiuille! We will miss her.*

Dave

Dave May - April 25, 2014 at 12:29 PM

TA

“ *Dear Karen and family,
We are very sorry to hear about the loss of your Mom. Our thoughts are with you and your family during this most difficult time. We will be keeping you and your Mom in our prayers these days and in the coming weeks.*
The Tanners

Tanners - April 25, 2014 at 12:29 PM