



Alice Anne Leister

OCT 10, 1936 - OCT 1, 2023



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Big Rapids - Alice Anne Leister, 86, of Big Rapids and Chippewa Lake, passed away Sunday, October 1, 2023, at Munson Hospice House in Traverse City. Alice was born to Rexford and Margaret Keller on October 10, 1936, in Delaware, OH. She graduated from Delaware High School in 1954. Alice earned a Bachelor's degree from Ohio Wesleyan University in December 1957, and later a Master's degree in Education from University of Minnesota.

On February 1, 1958, Alice married Jesse Leister of Constatine MI. They started their lives together in Fenton, MI, where Alice also began a teaching journey in the local elementary school. In 1965, they moved to Big Rapids, embracing their new community, establishing their home and raising three children, a family in God's love. This also included opening their home to two foreign exchange students for added joy.

A life-long educator, the idea of helping others personified Alice. While building the family foundation, she initially taught reading at Ferris State College. But the formative grades were her calling, so she quickly transitioned to a teaching career at Big Rapids Public Schools. She started at Hillcrest Elementary teaching first grade, eventually teaching at all four elementary schools in town through her tenure. Of particular note, Alice developed the unique "Junior First" program to enhance foundational education in Big Rapids, a model that was adopted by schools across the State of Michigan.

Faith was a cornerstone to every aspect of her life. Alice served the Lord and congregation as a member of the First United Methodist Church in Big Rapids for nearly 60 years. Active in the nursery, Sunday school, choirs, Boy Scouts, women's groups, and Bible studies, she also wrote countless inspirational articles in church bulletins and newsletters. Her joy, faith and compassion were felt by all.

To Alice, life and learning were about experience. Beginning with annual family trips



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to Florida, fishing in Canada, and camping in local parks, she enjoyed new adventures across the USA. She visited sites from Washington DC to the deserts, to Mt Saint Helens, Yellowstone, and Denali National Park. She trekked to Germany, Sweden, and Mexico. After retiring in 1994, Alice and Jesse planted winter roots in Texas, becoming annual snowbirds.

Alice is survived by her children, Colonel (ret) William (Deborah) Leister, Susan (Matt) McCullen, and Rebecca (Ted Rueffer) Davis; 10 grandchildren, Jesse (Madison), Casey (Judah Weeks), Brett, Taylor, Nick, Josh, Elyse, Shane, Mac, and Maddy; and many nieces and nephews. Alice was preceded in death by her husband of 58 years, Jesse, her parents and her sister Mary.

Funeral services will be 11 a.m., Friday, October 6, 2023, at the First United Methodist Church in Big Rapids, with Pastor Jeremy Wicks officiating. Burial will follow in the Chippewa Lake Cemetery. Alice's family will greet friends from 4-7 p.m., Thursday, October 5, 2023 at the Mohnke Funeral Home in Big Rapids. Memorial contributions in her name may be made to the First United Methodist Church of Big Rapids. Share a memory or express condolences at mohnkefuneralhome.com.



Tribute Wall

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JZ

Janet Zerbe posted:

My husband, Tom Zerbe has such fond memories of Alice and her parents. He always enjoyed visiting and spending time with Alice. He was impressed by her positive spirit considering the troubles she had. I wish her family comfort from good memories.

October 10 at 8:00 PM

LS

Lois Spedowski lit a candle in honor of Alice.

Alice and Jess were instrumental in my kid's and grandkids lives. My appreciation goes to both of them for the love and caring they have always shown to all. She makes me a better person by her humble example. Blessings Alice

October 4 at 8:00 PM



PT

Peggy Turner lit a candle in honor of Alice.

Dear Billy, Susan and Becky, I am so sorry for your loss. May God grant you all the "peace that passes understanding" at this painful time. Your parents were both so kind to me and everyone else they touched. God Bless You All...Peggy Turn

October 4 at 8:00 PM



PB

Pat Beetley posted:

To Alice's wonderful family!! am so sorry for your loss. As you know, Alice and I enjoyed a wonderful close relationship for many, many years. We enjoyed watching each other's families grow up and heard many exciting stories of family life!

October 3 at 8:00 PM

CW

Constance Westgate posted:

Bill, Susan and Becky, I'm so very sorry for your loss. Connie Corrie

October 3 at 8:00 PM



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Tracy Hatchew posted:

Mrs. Leister was my first grade teacher and I remember her so fondly. My parents had just gotten divorced and she was so kind and caring to me. I will never forget her. She surely made an impact on me.

October 3 at 8:00 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Alice by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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