



Virginia Zwickel Willkie

June 10, 1927 - April 15, 2017

Nancy “Virginia” Zwickel Willkie, 89, [daughter-in-law of 1940 Republican presidential nominee Wendell L. Willkie], died April 15, 2017 in Indianapolis.

She was born in Anderson, Indiana on June 10, 1927, the daughter of Wilbur C. and Nelle (Daniels) Zwickel, and grew up in Connersville, where her pharmacist father was the proprietor of Economy Drug Store for five decades.

Mrs. Willkie was proud to have attended Maplewood School and to be a 1945 Connersville High School graduate. After earning a B.A. in Sociology from DePauw University in 1949, where she was a member of Delta Delta Delta sorority. She taught one year in the Connersville School System before postgraduate work at Indiana State University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

In 1951, she married Richard Adamson of Terre Haute and lived on the far eastside of Indianapolis. She later moved to Knightstown, where she lived from 1963 to 1965 with her daughter, Laura, and taught first grade at the Central School in Henry County. In 1965, she married Philip H. Willkie of Rushville and moved to Posey Township, Rush County. She later settled in Rushville where she restored and lived in an 1876 Italianate house that, along with the historic Durbin Hotel, served as Wendell L. Willkie’s 1940 presidential campaign headquarters.

Mrs. Willkie's extensive civic and volunteer activities included teaching adult reading at the Rushville Public Library, and serving on the Advisory Cabinet of the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site and on the Board of Rush County Heritage. She was also a member of Athenaeum Turners, Athenaeum Foundation, the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, the Indiana German Heritage Society (charter member), the Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Columbia Club, and the Rush County Historical Society, as well as a member of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. She was an avid fan of Public Broadcasting and National Public Radio, especially "A Prairie Home Companion," and an early supporter of WFYI in Indianapolis.

Mrs. Willkie enjoyed time with family and friends, reading, museums, antiques, historic preservation, and national and international travel, which included visiting Babstadt, Wuerttemberg, Germany, the ancestral village of the Zwickels. She was a formidable but good-natured competitor at Scrabble and croquet, once saying, "I don't mind winning against my children – just not by very much." She regularly rode her bicycle to morning coffee with friends at various Rushville locales, and in later life became known and appreciated for wearing a variety of stylish hats and scarves.

Mrs. Willkie was also known for a rapier-like wit, wielded with gentle good humor that left a listener with a smile and a "Virginia quip" to be regularly quoted over the years. She never lost the ability to laugh at herself; asked just days before her passing why she was in an adult living facility, she replied "I'm here because I'm not all there." She was also a life-long learner who cared about proper speech and proper conduct. She was not reticent about encouraging better grammar, and it was said Rush County men reflexively stood a bit straighter in her presence.

In recent years, Mrs. Willkie celebrated her birthday with family and friends at

the annual "Wicket World of Croquet" at the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site. On winning the tournament with her son David in 2006, she observed, "I never imagined being lauded for my athletic achievements on my 79th birthday." The champion's cup was renamed in her honor.

She is survived by her daughter, Laura Adamson Selm (William) of Indianapolis; son, Benjamin J. Willkie, Captain USN (Veronica) of Hawaii; son David W. Willkie of Indianapolis; and three stepsons: Wendell L. Willkie, II (Carlotta) of Connecticut, and Philip H. Willkie and Frank P. Willkie of Minnesota. She is also survived by her only sibling, Margaret Walker (Richard) of Madison, Wisconsin, and six grandchildren: Nicholas, Karl, Emma, and Alice Selm; and Nathan and Arlinda Willkie.

Her parents and spouses preceded her in death.

Calling for Mrs. Willkie will be Wednesday, April 19, 2017 from 4pm to 8pm at Moster Mortuary. Funeral service will be Thursday, April 20, 2017 at 10am at the First Presbyterian Church. Burial immediately following in East Hill Cemetery. All services will be in Rushville, IN. In lieu of flowers, please make donations either to the Heart of Rushville or the Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site.

The family would like to thank Marquette Health Center and Indy Pilates in Indianapolis for providing over five years of wonderful care.

Previous Events

Visitation

APR **19**. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Moster Mortuary
334 North Main Street
Rushville, IN 46173
(765) 932-3914
info@mostermortuary.com
<https://www.mostermortuary.com>

Service

APR **20**. 10:00 AM (ET)

First Presbyterian Church
Rushville, IN

Tribute Wall



“ *Virginia Zwickel Willkie*

January 28, 2023 at 12:19 PM



“ *Dear David, I was so very sad to read about your mother. She was a truly unique as Nd remarkable person. I didn't realize she was here--could have visited with her. But that shows that we haven't kept in touch.*

Gay Burkhart - April 24, 2017 at 01:40 PM



“ *It was always my honor to visit with Mrs. Willkie; whether it be on the front porch or up at Trinity. Amazing lady that could visualize the entire picture/journey of life. She always ended our conversation with, "Toodle Lu" as she trotted away. Sincere thoughts and prayers to the Selm and Willkie families. Mick Saunders*

Mick Saunders - April 19, 2017 at 04:25 PM



“ *Laura and family ~
Although it's been many years, I remember your mother a such a lovely lady! You've been on my mind since I read the article in the newspaper. (I have attempted mailing a card to you, Laura ... just not sure of your present address, so I thought I would also use this mode of contact.)
Fondly, Nancy Welch Witty ~ Rockville, IN*

Nancy Welch Witty - April 19, 2017 at 12:54 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Virginia Zwickel Willkie.*



April 18, 2017 at 02:46 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Virginia Zwickel Willkie.*



April 18, 2017 at 12:32 PM



“ *Amazing woman and a great mother to all of us at Culver and beyond. Loved her and her great sense of humor so much. We are all going to miss her very much.*

Greg Farrall - April 18, 2017 at 10:01 AM



“ *I have had the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Willkie most of my adult life. She was a great source of knowledge on just about everything, and just fun to be with! She was always interested in what was going on in a persons life, and always had a positive outlook on things. What a role model! She will be greatly missed by her family, and our hearts go out to the Selm and Willkie families.*

Roger Bosse - April 18, 2017 at 08:01 AM

CH

“ *Cathy Fordyce Hankins lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie*



Cathy Fordyce Hankins - April 17, 2017 at 10:16 PM

VW

“ *Van Walters lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie*



Van Walters - April 17, 2017 at 09:33 PM

DR

“ *What a wonderful Lady. My heart goes out to you all.*

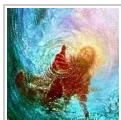
Dr. Tom Rayford. - April 17, 2017 at 08:07 PM



“ *Beth Clifton lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie*



Beth Clifton - April 17, 2017 at 08:03 PM



I remember visiting their home with her daughter Laura when we were in high school. I briefly met her, and what a wonderful legacy she left. Prayers for the family....

Beth Clifton - April 17, 2017 at 08:07 PM

JD

“*Jacqueline Duke lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie*



Jacqueline Duke - April 17, 2017 at 07:50 PM



“*Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Virginia Zwickel Willkie.*



April 17, 2017 at 05:04 PM

CW

“*Carolyn Wesley lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie*



Carolyn Wesley - April 17, 2017 at 04:58 PM

MS

“*What an amazing lady! I have many memories of Virginia and my aunt Helen Moore on Virginia's front porch. Prayers to the whole family. I will especially keep Ben and David as well as Laura and Bill in my thoughts at this time. Hugs! Martha Hiti Strobl and my daughters, Sarah and Becca.*

Martha Hiti Strobl - April 17, 2017 at 10:36 AM

RG

“ Richard Glanzman lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie



Richard Glanzman - April 17, 2017 at 10:00 AM

RG

She was a caring and witty lady who will be missed.

Richard Glanzman - April 17, 2017 at 10:02 AM



Laura.....I am so sorry to hear of your mother's passing. May the Lord wrap you in His arms of comfort during these difficult times.

Debbie Kennedy Hancock.....April 19, 2017

Debbie Hancock - April 19, 2017 at 07:44 PM

TM

“ Terri Kortu At Marquette lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie



Terri Kortu at Marquette - April 17, 2017 at 09:56 AM

SW

“ Steve And Jane Ward lit a candle in memory of Virginia Zwickel Willkie



Steve and Jane Ward - April 17, 2017 at 08:54 AM