



Ruby Geraldine "Jerry" Williams

July 12, 1925 - November 7, 2023

Ruby Geraldine "Jerry" Williams, an extraordinary woman passed away peacefully on Nov. 7, 2023, in Lenexa, Kansas. The first-born child of Moody D. Denison and Betha V. Denison, Jerry Williams lived a full life of 98 years. She was the glue that connected her four siblings, three children, nine grandchildren, and twelve great-grandchildren.

Born July 12, 1925, in Kansas City, Missouri, Jerry lived her first two years in the big city, where her father worked in the stockyards and as a trolley car conductor. Wanting to raise their children in a more close-knit community like their native Grundy County, Missouri, Moody and Betha relocated their growing family to the countryside when Jerry was 2. Living on various farms in the Tindall, Missouri area, her father raised livestock, and did a joint venture with his brother raising and selling chickens. In 1939, the family moved to Eldon, Missouri, where they bought the grocery store next to their home. Located at 804 S. Grand, Denison's Market was a fixture in the town that at the time was home to 2,500 people. Moving to Eldon was an adjustment for Jerry, who was now 14 and had grown up wearing overalls to school. Now, she went to school with girls who wore dresses and pleated skirts.

After graduating Eldon High School Class of 1943, she rode the train to start her nursing degree at Kansas City General Hospital. With WWII raging, she prepared to be a cadet nurse but was never called up to serve because the

war ended by the time she graduated nursing school in the summer of 1946. Although Jerry worked in hospitals, the majority of her nursing career was spent in an industrial setting. The longest job she held was with government contractor Bendix (now Honeywell), which manufactures missile parts.

Jerry was introduced to her first husband, Joe Williams of Versailles, by his sister Martha Williams, a nursing school classmate. The couple's first date in February 1946 led to a short courtship and an October 12 wedding. (Known from birth as Geraldine, her nursing school friends had started calling her "Gerry." After accepting a marriage proposal from Joe, she changed the spelling to "Jerry" so they would be Jerry and Joe.) The couple's first child, Larry, arrived two years later, followed by Ellen, then Stan. By 1964, they were living in Raytown, Missouri, where all three children graduated from high school.

Jerry's second husband was the result of some matchmaking on the part of her half-sister Mona Lefler Stassel. In October 1972, Jerry started dating Don Fairchild, and they were wed on Valentine's Day 1973. At age 55, Jerry retired from Bendix and she and Don moved to Vacaville in Northern California area in 1981, where she would be closer to her brothers, sisters, nieces, and nephews. She worked summers as a nurse at a tomato canning factory, keeping fit with swimming and exercise classes while developing many enduring friendships. Don passed away in 1988 and five years later she married Paul Ziegler. For health reasons, she moved back to Missouri in 2005 and then to Kansas in 2009. By then, she had officially retired at the age of 68. She originally lived at Brookdale Town Village in Leawood, and still has friends there today. Then, in failing health, she moved to Westchester Village in Lenexa, in walking distance of her daughter. Jerry loved God, her family, and was quite fond of the color pink, the shade she chose to paint the exterior of her Vacaville home.

Jerry is survived by her children, Larry Williams (Jenna) of Bedford, Texas; Ellen Johnston (Calvin) of Lenexa, Kansas; Stan Williams of Edwards, Missouri; brother Gale (Donna) Denison of Lee's Summit, Missouri; nine grandchildren, and twelve great-grandchildren; in addition to many nieces and nephews and longtime friends who adored her. Jerry is predeceased by her sister Vee Riley, brother Dwight Denison, half-sister Mona Lefler Stassel, and great-grandson Liam Zumwalt.

A family memorial service will be held at a later time, when her ashes will be interred in Greenmore Memorial Gardens in Barnett, Missouri.

Arrangements are under the direction and care of the Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home of Versailles.