

rural Horton , KS



Evelyn Ann Jones, 88, passed away peacefully at the The Pines nursing home in Hiawatha, Kansas, in the early hours of September 5, 2023.

She was born Evelyn Ann Ratzlaff in Newton, Kansas, on May 17, 1935, and grew up on a farm near Halstead. Her sister, Irene, was four years older, and an adopted brother, Carl, came to live on the farm in his early teens. Evelyn and Irene had milking duties every morning before school, and Evelyn often finished with her cows first and then helped Irene until they had got through the herd. She followed Irene to Newton High School, where she was an enthusiastic supporter of the boys' basketball team, the Railroaders, who won the state tournament for large schools during her junior year, 1952, defeating Shawnee Mission, 54-53, in the championship game, played in Manhattan.

Evelyn graduated the next year, 1953—her graduation gifts were a portable Royal manual typewriter and a set of marbled blue Samsonite luggage with white trim. With them, she stepped onto the Santa Fe Chief and disembarked at Topeka to enroll at Stormont Vail Nursing School. There she made a circle of friendships, and one or another of the young women would sometimes break curfew by climbing out the ground-floor window to go purchase a bottle of wine to be shared in the room. The circle included lifelong friend Shirley Dewitt, who upon marriage became Shirley Krass. In September 1957, Evelyn also married, to Robert Jones, who farmed east of Horton. (They drove away from the church in his glass-topped Ford Crown Victoria.) The Krass and Jones families spent many memorable years camping, boating, and fishing on Milford and Tuttle Creek Reservoirs. A summertime ritual was for the four boys of the two families to spend a week having adventures on the farm while the three girls of the two families spent the week at the Krass home in Topeka. Then Shirley and Evelyn would meet back at the courthouse square in Holton a second time to swap kids, and this time the boys would go to Topeka while the girls went to the farm. Then, a week later, the two mothers would again drive to Holton, and each would return home with her original set of kids.

Evelyn had grown up in the Zion Lutheran Church in Newton, and upon marriage joined the Zion Lutheran Church in Hiawatha, where she and Bob worshiped throughout their lives, and where she took her four children to Vacation Bible School and confirmation classes. Along with her friend Esther Middendorf, she served for many years in a leadership capacity with the

church- Lutheran Women- Missionary League.

As a young mother, she would sometimes pitch a baseball to her children in the field just west of the house, until one day six-year-old Ben hit a sharp line drive that plunked her in the shins. After that, he was on his own for batting practice, but she did take her children to little league games for many years, as well as supported their school and 4-H activities and was a den mother for Cub Scouts and Brownies. She kept active by walking. On hot summer days, she would take the kids to the Horton Municipal Pool. But on other hot summer days, she would lead them, hoes and empty seed-corn sacks in hand, to a pasture on the farm thick with invasive thistles, and the five would spend the next two hours in the grueling heat snipping the heads off the thistles into a sack and hoeing the stalks out of the ground.

Evelyn enjoyed reading Capper- Weekly, National Geographic, mysteries, and biographies. Growing up, she savored the short stories of O. Henry. She kept a garden just east of the house where she raised xonias and vegetables. She filled the basement shelves with Ball jars of preserves. Every August, she boiled sweet corn in a pressure cooker, sliced off the kernels and stored them in square Tupperware quart containers in the freezer. Every November, she began the process of baking peppernuts, a Mennonite cookie tidbit about the diameter of a nickel, the recipe for which she had gotten from a friend of her mother-. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the kitchen filled with tubs of these addictive cookies. She gave her children a bag each to take to their schoolteachers at the holidays, and the teachers were indeed sorry when the last of the four Jones kids passed through their class, because it meant there would be no more peppernuts! She lined the curving walk at the front of the house with irises, transplants of which now bloom each spring in Kalamazoo, Michigan, at the home of her daughter-in-law.

Evelyn, an R.N., worked for many years as head nurse at the Horton Hospital, usually on the night shift, which sometimes featured dramatic incidents. She retired early, in 1980, and went back to school to get her bachelor- degree, first taking classes at Highland Community College and later at Washburn University. Washburn awarded her a bachelor of nursing degree in 1984.

Evelyn traveled extensively around the United States with her husband, Bob, visiting all 48 contiguous state capitol buildings. They spent parts of winters in Las Vegas for a few years, where she took painting lessons. Then, in the early 1990s, the couple bought a home on a bay in the Florida Keys, where they wintered for the rest of her life, and where she collected crocodile doorstops and figurines found at yard sales, and threatened lightning-quick iguanas with an old golf club. International trips included two to Australia and New Zealand with Ken and Chris Koger, a short stay on the Pacific in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and a solo visit by Evelyn to Great Britain in 1981. They also spent time at the Lake of the Ozarks, where they had a home next door to their daughter Sarah. In a twist of fate, daughter Beth and her family lived for many years in Hesston, Kansas, just up Ridge Road 10 miles from what had been Evelyn-grandparents' (and then parents') farmhouse.

Evelyn, sometimes called "Eve" by her husband and friends, was preceded in death by her eldest son, Allen Mark Jones, her parents, Arnold Benjamin Ratzlaff and Dorothy Glennis Steele Ratzlaff, her sister Irene Younkman, and her brother, Carl Walter.

She is survived by her husband, Robert Paul Jones, married 66 years ago this month; her second son, Benjamin Clay Jones (wife Irma Lopez), of Kalamazoo, Michigan; her daughters, Beth Louise Rizza (husband Andrew), of Georgetown, Texas; and Sarah Lynn Jones, of Lake Ozark, Missouri; grandchildren Shawn (wife Pam) Rizza, Grace (husband Mark) Kucza, Luke (wife Jess) Rizza, Zach Rizza, and Will Rizza; and great-grandchildren Kate Rizza, Harper Rizza, and Otis Kucza.

A graveside service is planned for 3:00 P.M. on Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at the Kennekuk Cemetery, on a hilltop a half-mile west of the farmhouse where Evelyn lived from 1957 until earlier this summer.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Zion Lutheran Church of Hiawatha and the Stormont Vail Foundation, in care of Dishon-Maple-Chaney Mortuary, www.dishon-maple-chaney.com, (785) 486-3811.