



Catherine V. Reilly

August 1, 1923 - March 16, 2020

Catherine Veronica Reilly, a resident of Eatontown, passed away on March 16, 2020 at Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch, less than five months before her 97th birthday. She died as she lived, with dignity, grace, faith in God, and in the loving care of her family. Catherine was better known as Kitty, Mrs. R., Mrs. Kitty, Herself, and—her favorite names—Gram and Gram Kitty.

Kitty was born on August 1, 1923, in Point Pleasant, and was raised in the Oranges, graduating from East Orange High School in 1941. She took a position at Tiffany and Company in the Forest Hill Section of Newark, working there for several years before moving on due to the long commute.

In her teenage years, Kitty caught the attention of a neighborhood boy named Vincent Reilly while at a picnic with friends. After an initial date consisting of ping-pong at a friend's house followed by burgers at the White Castle in Orange, an amazing love story was born. Nothing - not the onset of World War II, the separation and anxiety that followed while Vin served in Europe, or some very trying times at home—could keep them apart.

Kitty and Vin married in April of 1946, and their marriage produced seven sons - Vincent Jr., Michael, Kevin, Brian, Kerry, Christopher, and Sean.

The family lived in West Orange and Livingston before settling in South

Orange in the early 1960s. While those years were happy ones, there were also difficult times mixed in. Vincent Jr. died shortly after birth a year into their marriage; Kevin passed away from an illness in 1970; and Vincent, the love of Kitty's life, was killed in a car accident in 1973.

As a 50 year-old widow with five children still at home, including three teenagers and a seven-year old, she went back to work and ensured that her children all received their college educations. She also set an example along the way with her extraordinary faith and service. At Our Lady of Sorrows in South Orange, she served as President of the Rosary Altar Society, and also volunteered for nearly 20 years with the Candle Lighters, where her work with infant Down syndrome children created friendships with families that spanned the rest of her life.

When she made the decision to move to Monmouth County in the mid 1980s, two things brought her great happiness - picking out a new home in Eatontown, and then finding a nearby church - St. Dorothea - that would become her spiritual home for the rest of her years. She became involved in just about everything at St. Dorothea, whether it be serving as a Eucharistic Minister, Treasurer of the Women's Guild, washing and ironing the altar linens, becoming a Trustee of the parish or attaining status as honorary mom to the priests. In fact, there weren't many who worshipped there over the past three decades who didn't know Kitty Reilly! Her generous nature extended to crocheting baby blankets for both babies she knew and needy babies she didn't know. Kitty truly lived her Catholic faith every day.

Kitty worked for many years at Stern's Department Store, first in West Orange and later in Monmouth County, and remained working there after it became a Macy's. She continued to enjoy regular Christmas gatherings with her old Stern's gang, or as she called them, "the gals from Stern's". For a time, she was also an active member of a local Red Hat club. Even well into her 90's,

Kitty maintained a social life that rivaled those of people one-quarter her age !

In 1993, Kitty became a grandmother twice—with the birth of Kelly in June and Mary Kate in December. She finally had some little girls to spoil, and she enjoyed every moment of it! But she also got her boy not long after, when her grandson Michael Patrick was born in 1997. Kitty was extraordinarily proud of her three grandchildren. She would eagerly tell friends about their accomplishments, which were often accompanied by pictures. Did we mention that Kitty LOVED to take and show off pictures of her family?

While Kitty had tremendous love of her family, her family had just as much love for her. All of her children have amusing stories of how they were asked by all sorts of people, from store cashiers, people at the next table at restaurants, or even a celebrity or two, if we were Kitty Reilly's son, daughter-in-law, or grandchild. And every time, we had the honor and privilege of responding "Yes!"

She treated her family with kindness, sincerity and unconditional support, encouraging each of them in their dreams and nurturing them in challenging times. Her ever-positive attitude, honesty, loving Irish smile and gentle sense of humor will be missed but never forgotten. She was the strength and guide of her adoring family.

Although born in the USA, Kitty always carried a wee bit of Ireland with her, having visited that country five times, and having participated in many Irish events over the years. As everyone who knows her can attest, she possessed the gift of easy conversation and never met a stranger. Above all, her legacy will live on through friendliness, doing good deeds for others and by striving to make a difference.

Kitty is survived by her five devoted and loving sons, Michael and his partner Roni; Brian and his wife Mary; Kerry; Christopher and his wife Lu-Ann; and Sean; as well as by her treasured grandchildren, Kelly, Mary Kate, and Michael. She is also survived by Chris's in-laws, Josephine and Linda Telesco; her nieces and nephew; and a host of cherished and caring friends, too numerous to name.

Many of Kitty's dear friends passed away before her, and most likely were anxiously waiting for her to arrive in heaven to get the party started.

Because of the current restrictions, services this week will be limited to a graveside ceremony on Thursday, March 19 at 11:30 a.m. at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in East Hanover. A Mass of Remembrance to celebrate her grand life will take place at a later date. Bongarzone Funeral Home, 2400 Shafto Road, Tinton Falls, is in charge of arrangements.

Contributions in Kitty's memory can be made to Team Shamrock, which honors former South Orange neighbor Donald Robertson, who perished on Sept. 11, 2001. Make checks payable to Tunnel To Towers Foundation, and note Team Shamrock on the memo line. Address is 2361 Hylan Blvd, Staten Island, NY, 10306. You can also visit <http://www.tunnel2towers.org> and in the comment section, note Kitty Reilly for Team Shamrock.

The family also wishes to thank her favorite physician, Dr. Jeff Felzenberg. We are additionally grateful to the B5 Nursing Staff at Monmouth Medical Center, for their outstanding comfort and support over her final days.

For online condolences, please visit Catherine's memorial page at www.bongarzonefuneralhome.com

Sympathy cards may be mailed to: The Reilly Family, c/o Bongarzone Funeral Home, 2400 Shafto Road, Tinton Falls, NJ 07712

Cemetery Details

Gate of Heaven Cemetery-East Hanover

225 Ridgedale Avenue
East Hanover, NJ

Previous Events

Graveside

MAR 19. 11:30 AM (ET)

Gate of Heaven Cemetery-East Hanover
225 Ridgedale Avenue
East Hanover, NJ

Tribute Wall

BD

“Kitty was a treasured friend to my mom, June, and dad, Joe. After my dad passed, Kitty always made sure my mom was safe. Kitty and I stayed in touch until fall of 2019. Sadly, when I reached out to Kitty after that to no avail, I realized Kitty had most likely moved on to her new home. My dad and mom had the utmost respect for Kitty. As my dad put it, Kitty was beyond classy. I know June is so happy to be in the company of her very good friend once again.

Barbara DeRollo - June 23, 2020 at 04:22 PM

CB

“We are so sorry to learn of Kitty's death. She was a dear friend of our parents, Ann and Bill Waldron. I kept in touch with Kitty up until last year, long after my parents passed. She was always so nice to talk to! I will miss her. Please be sure to post and share the date of the memorial Mass, as I'd like to attend.
With love and sympathy,
Cathy and Andy Balto, Anna and Bryan.

Cathy Balto - March 22, 2020 at 01:49 PM

DJ

“I remember kitty when my husband and I first joined Saint Dorothea's. She watched us grow up she watched our kids grow up and she even got to see my granddaughter for a little bit a time that she was around. The last memory I remember was when she gave my granddaughter Addison a mass card. She will be truly missed by my family and I.. She was a really sweet person loved her so much will miss her very much too but now she's up in heaven at the table with God till next time kitty that we meet

Diane Johnson - March 21, 2020 at 06:35 PM

RG

“Kitty was an exceptional lady! For many of us who knew her for many years through our Parish of St. Dorothea, she was a loving friend, a caring person, a faithful and hard working parishioner. When my dear wife Cecilia passed away five months ago, Kitty remarked: "If Cecilia is not in Heaven, then who can be?". Well, I know the answer: Kitty can be! At her last birthday, I told her that we were following in her footsteps hoping to eventually reach the age of 100. She almost made it. She will be greatly missed. My family and I send our prayers and heartfelt condolences to Kitty's family.
Renato Gadenz

Renato Gadenz - March 20, 2020 at 12:33 PM

JM

“Kitty was a huge part of our family. It wasn't a pool side party or BBQ if Kitty and Kerry had not arrived yet. Kitty and my mom were the dearest of friends and she always looked after us especially our brother Brian. We loved her and always looked forward to seeing her. Please know we are so sorry for your loss. We will miss you Mrs. Reilly.

Joann Thornton Matos - March 20, 2020 at 09:49 AM

ET

“Mrs Reilly was an awesome woman and a tremendous role model for us all, she was the epitome of The Greatest Generation. Our thoughts and prayers are with the whole Reilly clan.

We'll have a toast for Kitty tonight ;)

Ed Thornton - March 19, 2020 at 05:00 PM

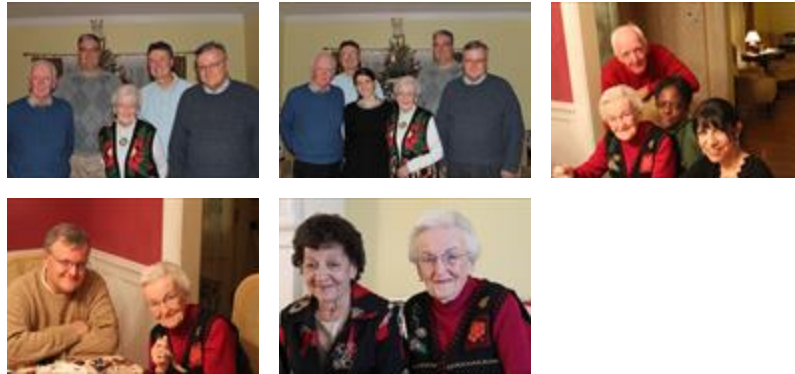
MP

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with The Reilly family. Kitty was the original single mother. God bless her.
May she rest in peace.
Absent from the body
Present with the Lord.*

Margaret Porter - March 19, 2020 at 12:24 PM

KR

“ *28 files added to the album Gram with Family*

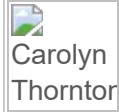


Kelly Reilly - March 18, 2020 at 03:47 PM



“ *The whole Reilly Clan has our thoughts and prayers on the loss of the most wonderful mother, Kitty Reilly. She was a rock, not only for her family, but for mine too. She put into this world 10X what she took out of it; a noble person who changed lives and made every encounter funny, warm, and memorable. We will all miss her very, very much. Would that we all could measure up to her outstanding example. My mother, Lois, counted her among the dearest and loyalist of friends through the best and worst of times. Always there for all of us. Love and Peace to the Reilly Family in this hour of loss and sorrow, Colleen Thornton*

Colleen Thornton - March 18, 2020 at 09:44 AM



Carolyn
Thornton

I could not have said it better Colleen! We will miss you Kitty! 💕💕 Much love to the Reilly Clan

Carolyn Thornton - March 18, 2020 at 09:57 AM



BR

Thank you to the you both and all of the Thornton family. We all appreciate the genuine friendship between the families. My mom loved being with your family.

Brian Reilly - March 18, 2020 at 03:50 PM



BH

“ *Bongarzone Funeral Home lit a candle in memory of Catherine V. Reilly*



Bongarzone Funeral Home - March 18, 2020 at 09:31 AM



“ *Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Catherine V. Reilly.*



March 17, 2020 at 08:00 PM

PA

“ Aunt Kitty. xxxxxxxooooo. How I'll miss her upbeat voice dancing along on every phone call. She was always so thoughtful. Every year she sent a St. Paddy's card across the miles, filled with shamrock glitter. Her attitude was so positive that you'd never know of her losses. I admire her so much! She and my godfather Vinnie were deeply in love. They and our family shared the tragedies of losing a son, which bonded us forever. Our families started off together during their first years of marriage, in the 3-flat building dad inherited from the mysterious "Mrs. McLoughlin". When I did our family tree, Kitty shared many wonderful conversations since her childhood that opened my heart fully. She spoke of the day she went into labor on Vernon Place and how the blizzard was so severe she had to be carried all the way up the street. She had the strength of a true Irish woman, making it through her son Kevin's death and then Vinnie's accident, with her unquestioning belief in God carrying her through it all. What a job she did raising my wonderful, funny, sensitive, sweet cousins! All boys. Kitty, I raise my glass to you and baked Irish bread today with the carved-in cross blessing you. Surely you get the EZ pass to the golden gates. Love you forever. Happy St. Paddy's Day. Hope you're celebrating with Kevin, Vinnie and your mom.

patty - March 17, 2020 at 05:34 PM

DG

“Mrs. Reilly, as I knew her through my long friendship with her daughter-in-law, Lu-Ann, was such a remarkable, lovely, intelligent and sweet-natured person it was always a joy to see her during visits to her son Chris and Lu-Ann's home for family parties. As her tall, handsome sons towered over this delicate, elegant woman I was amazed that someone so petite had raised such strapping men, never knowing until now for how many years she'd done it by herself. As a mother who's only raised two sons alone I can't imagine raising six, but having the honor of knowing Mrs. Reilly I'm not surprised--she was a true force of nature, and "Herself," especially on this St. Patrick's Day, will be sorely missed by all who loved and admired her. I'll always remember the twinkle in her eye, her sense of humor, and how we both delighted in little solar-powered toys on our cars' dashboard. That playful spirit is what kept--and will always keep--"Kitty" forever young in our hearts. God bless and keep her, and make His face to shine upon her, now and forever after, amen.

Deborah Guarino - March 17, 2020 at 05:12 PM

RS

“Today St Patrick Day Im saying good by to my dear Irish friend Kitty. I have so many wonderful memories that we shared Both were Eucharist Minister and we went to a few Chrism Mass together during Holy Week. I oftened tease her of her love for shoes but she always wore them with beautiful styles of dress. We both shared our love of a having a little drink of Scotch now and then She also made the best Irish Soda Bread . Thank you Kitty for being a wise a caring friend to me and many others Going to miss you a lot Love Rosalie Sneath

Rosalie Sneath - March 17, 2020 at 04:23 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Catherine V. Reilly.*



March 17, 2020 at 03:55 PM