



Joanne Therese (Barthel) Lesage, beloved for her kindness, generosity and coolness under fire (especially the kind that raising four boys tends to ignite), died Dec. 4, 2025, of natural causes at La Bella Vila senior care residence in Southwest Portland. She was 97.

Joanne was born Oct. 31, 1928, in Marlborough, Mass., to Chevigny and Dolores "Dolly" (Grenier) Barthel. She had an older brother, Leon Paul. She often called herself a "witch" for being born on Halloween. She was anything but.

Joanne spent her first eight years in Gardner, Mass., and attended Holy Rosary School, where her classes were all in French. Her family then moved to a house on 45 acres in Westminster, Mass., built by her father, an architect and contractor. She attended Academy Hill School in Westminster from third through ninth grade. At Fitchburg High School, she participated in basketball, drama club and glee club, and graduated in 1946. She earned an

English degree at Becker Junior College in Worcester, Mass., then went to work as a legal secretary.

She spent many summers at the family's camp on Contoocook Lake in East Jaffrey, N.H. When she was 16, her parents opened a restaurant next to their home, and she worked long hours as a hostess and waitress. She was active in sports in her youth, including skiing, ice skating, swimming and golf. Despite standing only 5 feet 1, she played basketball for the Westminster Legionettes in the semipro Girls Industrial League from 1947-52. She was known as a hard-nosed player – her nickname was "Stomper" – with a deadly two-handed set shot. She later befuddled her much taller teenage sons in the driveway with that old-fashioned flat-footed shot.

On Sept. 4, 1954, Joanne married Frank Evans Lesage, whom she'd known since childhood, in Westminster. They moved to Oregon and bought a house in Garden Home, where they raised six children. Joanne sewed many of the children's clothes, was renowned for her baking skills and handled all of the family's finances. As Mom, and later as Nana to her grandchildren and great grandchildren, she always put her family before herself. Joanne was a devout member of St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Beaverton. She dedicated many hours of volunteer work to the church and the school, including spending three years on the school board and serving in the St. Gerard Guild well into her 80s. She was in the first graduating class of the Pontifical Catechetical Institute in 1979 and taught CCD for 12 years, four of them as parish religious education director. She and Frank started the St. Cecilia's Baptismal Program and taught Worldwide Marriage Encounter for many years.

She was a whiz at shorthand and at a typewriter, able to type 100 words per minute on a manual. After her children were all in school in the 1970s, she went to work as a secretary at Portland's Central Catholic High School. In 1979, she was hired as a legal secretary at Stoel Rives law firm downtown, where she worked until her retirement in 1995. One morning, outside the law firm's building, she fought off a purse snatcher who apparently was

unaware he was trying to mess with "Stomper."

Joanne took up watercolor painting in retirement and produced dozens of beautiful and sometimes whimsical pieces of art, many of which were turned into greeting cards. She never lost her toughness, as two broken hips and a broken rib later in life barely slowed her down.

In 2022, Joanne and Frank sold their home of 68 years and moved to The Stafford retirement community in Lake Oswego. Frank passed away in January 2023. In January 2024, Joanne moved to La Bella Vila.

Joanne is survived by her children, Lisa of Bend, Pete (Ann) of Tigard, Paul (Noreen) of Lake Oswego, Nanette Robinson (Jim) of Gladstone, Mike of Gladstone, and Matt (Tammy) of Portland; nine grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

A funeral Mass will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 21, at St. Cecilia Catholic Church in Beaverton. Interment will be at Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, Joanne requested that donations be sent to St. Vincent de Paul or St. Cecilia Catholic Church at 5105 S.W. Franklin Ave., Beaverton OR 97005-2896.

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