



## Mary Louise Willett

July 16, 1928 - May 11, 2024

Mary Louise Berning started the adventure of her life on July 16, 1928. She was the second child of Chester F. Berning and Mary E. Cook Berning and sister to Floyd, Caroline and Kay. Mary Lou, as she was always called, spent the first three years of her life on a houseboat on the Willamette River and was rather proud of the fact that she learned to swim before she could walk. Moving to a farm in Wilsonville, she was known to exasperate her mother by insisting all new clothes looked better from the top of the manure pile and that the best way to break in a new pair of shoes was by walking through mud puddles. Around her 18th year, she accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior and the trajectory of her life changed. After graduating high school, Mary Lou began working to save enough money to be the first one in her family to attend college. She chose Cascade Bible College in Portland. There, her favorite professor encouraged her to consider teaching as a career. As she did everywhere she went, she made lifelong friends at Cascade, especially within the drama department. She graduated and immediately began her teaching career.

Mary Lou remained involved with the drama department at Cascade where she eventually met Al Willett. They were married on April 4, 1957 and welcomed their first daughter a year later. A second daughter and son were added in 1960 and 1961.

In 1968, she and Al bought a farm outside of Newberg, Oregon, and the family began attending Newberg Friends Church. Pastor Richard Foster had a significant impact on her life and deeply influenced her Christian faith. In the mid-70's with her children finishing high school, she decided she wanted more to do than simply tend to her spectacular garden, care for her banty chickens, spoil her Corgi dogs and try to keep count of all her cats. She returned to college and obtained her Masters in Education. She resumed her career where teaching children to read blossomed into a passion. To the end of her life, it was a common occurrence for former students to thank her for her impact on their lives.

At church, in support groups and in teaching Mary Lou enjoyed friendships that lasted for decades. It was these friends who walked beside her through the peaks and valleys of her journey. She was always deeply grateful for their constant presence in her life.

Having “endured the indignities of aging” including losing her eyesight and hearing, breaking both hips, and undergoing heart surgery, on Saturday, May 11th, 2024, Mary Lou decided it was time to start a new adventure on the other side.

She leaves behind family and friends who loved and revered her and who will continue to be influenced by her kindness, her humor, and her wisdom. Among them are her children Lauri, Kathryn and Kurt, her grandchildren and great grandchildren, and her sisters Caroline and Kay. Rather than flowers, please consider donating to one of Mom's favorite charities: Wayside Friends Church, Friendsview Employee Appreciation Fund, Newberg FISH Emergency Service, or Newberg Habitat for Humanity.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JUN **15**. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Friendsview Retirement Community  
1301 Fulton Street  
Newberg, OR 97132

*Please wear your favorite colors. Mom would not want us to mourn her passing but would be delighted to know we gathered to remember the good times we had with her. This will be an informal gathering, just beverages, cookies and shared stories.*

# Tribute Wall

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“*Mary Lou was a dear? dear friend for many, many decades. Like a Sister and another Grandma to my 4 Granddaughters. This is late, as I was dealing with mini- strokes and an 8- day hospitalization when it was announced....just after having my FB account hacked. Elaine and I went to see her and she had recognized me right away and we were able to share some memories while she still had memories she was able to recall. I was planning to visit her this week when I ran into Elaine and she told me.. She was ready as she was not able to function as well as she used to and she was used to much mental stimulation. Kurt? Lauri and Becky were fabulous children and always very gracious. I think of her often and will see her again in the not-to-distant future. Blessings to the family.*

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**Sally Watd** - April 21, 2025 at 11:40 PM