



Billie Wilson

Edwardsville | Tuesday, April 18 2023

Billie Mae (Lange) Wilson, 86, of Edwardsville, passed away Tuesday, April 18, after a brief illness. She loved life and will always be in the hearts of her children, grandchildren and friends.

Billie Mae was born November 6, 1936, in Edwardsville. She was the youngest of four children of William Lange and Mabel Drafts Lange. She grew up in a house on Ruskin Avenue built by her father in 1924. As a child, she remembered swimming and ice skating on Le Clair Lake, going to movies at the Wildey Theatre and breaking her arm while riding her brother's horse on Franklin Avenue as a 12 year old. She completed Communion Classes at Eden United Church of Christ and enjoyed many class reunions.



As a student at Edwardsville High School, she was active in choir, GAA, and several other activities. She was a class officer her junior and senior years. She graduated in 1954 with honors. Soon after, she began working for First Federal Savings & Loan. A couple of years later, she began working at Granite City Steel where she had jobs with increased responsibility for the next 35 years. While at GCS, she was a member of the women's bowling team and active in the GCS Women's Club where she served as president for one year. She retired from GCS as an executive assistant in 1999.

Billie Mae's greatest pride and joy were her children, grandchildren and great grandchild. She is survived by son Michael Wilson of Edwardsville, daughter Marla (Erich) Merz of O'Fallon (IL) and son Mark (Brenda) Wilson also of Edwardsville. She is also survived by five grandchildren: Kyle Merz, Amanda (Sean) Eastman, Arika

Wilson, Abigail Wilson and Aftyn Wilson; and one great granddaughter, Ainsley Eastman. She is also survived by two nephews, William (Billy) Halstead, Jr., and James (Jimmy) Halstead of Advance, Mo.

She enjoyed hosting large family gatherings at any time but especially holidays. She was always ready for trips to the zoo, Science Center or a park with grandchildren and enjoyed playing games. For many years while her children were growing up, she sewed costumes designed by her brother Bob for her extended family to wear in the annual Edwardsville Halloween Parade. They were contest winners several years.

Billie Mae was very active in Edwardsville organizations and had a keen interest in Edwardsville history. She was a longtime member and fund raiser for the Goshen Preservation Society and worked many years to help save and relocate the Nickel Plate Railroad Depot. She was one of the early women who attended Boy Scout Leadership Training. In 2022, she contributed information and photos for an article written about the Lange family history for the Le Claire area newsletter. She was a long-time supporter of the restored Wildey Theatre and until recently enjoyed attending movies and other events there.

For many years, Billie Mae played pinochle several times a week at the Main Street Community Center. She helped organize players and games until early 2023. For more than 10 years, she was an active member of the Dresses for Haiti sewing group where one of her favorite projects was creating hundreds of pillowcase dresses for organizations to distribute in Haiti, Ghana and most recently in Zambia through African Vision of Hope.

Upon her retirement, Billie Mae took several long awaited trips: she visited Europe, Hawaii, Alaska, eastern Russia, Australia and New Zealand. She had to take extra suitcases to bring back souvenirs. She will be greatly missed by her family, and never forgotten.

Visitation will be at 11:30 p.m. Friday with services following at 1:30 p.m. at Saksa Funeral Home in Edwardsville. Burial will immediately follow at Woodlawn Cemetery. The family encourages donations in Billie Mae's memory be made to the Wildey Theatre.