



## Elizabeth Ann Fydenkevez

September 25, 1938 - May 31, 2021

Elizabeth Ann Fydenkevez died on Monday, May 31 at her home in Hadley. Betty was born on September 25, 1938, arriving home to Amherst's Cushman Village just days after a generational hurricane swept through the town. One force of nature welcoming another, you could say.

Betty was the daughter of Clayton E. Pratt and Marie H. (Sacco) Pratt. The oldest of 6 siblings, she soon learned the importance of hard work and responsibility. Betty had fond memories of growing up in the close-knit village. She was educated in the Cushman and Amherst school systems.

As a teenager, Betty worked several jobs, including in the tobacco fields of Hadley. It was there that she met her future husband, the late Richard Fydenkevez, forming a bond that would last for the rest of their lives. Betty and Dick married and settled in Hadley, purchasing the historic Comins homestead.

Together, they raised five children who will miss them dearly: Lynn (the late Richard) Felt of Hadley, Mark (Barbara) Fydenkevez of Colorado Springs, Glenn (Lisa) Fydenkevez of East Longmeadow, Tony (Amy) Fydenkevez of Hadley, and Carol (Steve) Szymkowicz of Hadley. She also leaves 14 grandchildren, 3 great grandchildren, and another great grandchild on the way.

Betty was never shy and loved to take on new challenges. One day she called the editor of the Amherst Bulletin to complain that the paper should cover more Hadley and farming news. By the end of the call, Betty had a job as a reporter. For several years, Betty co-wrote a local gardening and special interest column with her friend Sally Niedbala. Even while working and raising her family, Betty pursued her education at the University of Massachusetts, earning a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in education. Betty felt blessed to get a job at Hadley's Hooker Elementary School, and for nearly 35 years taught first grade, providing a foundation of learning for generations of Hadley students.

Her passion was teaching children how to read. Betty believed that reading opened doors to a world of knowledge and endless possibility. She also believed that every child could learn to read well, with enough perseverance, patience, and hard work. If a student struggled, Betty would never quit. After school or in the summer months, she would work with any student who needed help for as long as it took. It was her job, she said. For many summers, she also worked in a program for migrant families, giving children who were just learning English a chance to succeed in school.

Betty wanted her students to believe that they could overcome barriers and accomplish their goals. In her 60s, she took a course on motorcycle riding because she thought it would make an impression on students seeing “an old lady” ride into school on her motorbike. (She passed the course, but thankfully didn’t pursue riding.)

Betty never stopped learning herself, constantly taking courses, attending workshops, and reading books to improve her teaching skills. Right up to retirement (a decision she immediately regretted), Betty was still taking courses and trying to improve. She also enjoyed sharing her knowledge with others. She truly loved working with her student teachers and also taught courses to help college students develop their skills.

After she retired, she would joke that she couldn’t go to the grocery store without getting stopped and hugged by former students and their parents. Even in her later years, she could always recall minute details about her students from 20 or 30 years ago and could share details and funny stories about her days in the classroom.

Betty was a woman of faith, but it was never a blind faith. She believed that the Bible contained truth, and that it is our job to study scripture and live our lives based on this truth. Early mornings, before the sun was up, would find her in her “prayer chair” reading the Bible and jotting down inspirational verses and notes. She was an active member of the Most Holy Redeemer Church and served on the committee that built the new church in the 1970s. She was also proud to have helped organize two legendary “variety shows” to benefit the church, filled with singing, dancing, and comedy skits.

Betty loved her friends and neighbors, viewing them as extensions of her own family. She was always willing to help with town functions. She was proud to have been the lead organizer of the town’s stunning 350th gala ball.

Outside of work, Betty and Dick enjoyed gardening and travel, visiting most of the United States and traveling to Europe and Australia as well. They also brought the entire family

together for an annual vacation in Ogunquit, Maine, a tradition loved by generations of the Fydenkevez family. Although sad to see her go, her family is comforted knowing that Betty and Dick will be reunited. The couple was inseparable in life, and Betty has missed her husband terribly since he passed in September 2020.

Calling hours will be Sunday, June 6, 2021 from 2-4PM at the DROZDAL FUNERAL HOME, 120 Damon Rd., Northampton. A liturgy of Christian Burial will be celebrated Monday, June 7, 2021 at Most Holy Redeemer Church at 10AM. Burial will follow in Holy Rosary Cemetery.

Betty was a loving mother, wife, friend, and teacher. She was a force of nature who will long be remembered and deeply missed. In lieu of flowers, Betty's family suggests donations to the Edward Hopkins fund in her name.

Make checks payable to Edward Hopkins Educational Foundation P.O. Box 664 Hadley, MA 01035

# Cemetery

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## Holy Rosary Cemetery

Huntington Rd.

Hadley, MA, 01035

# Events

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**JUN** **Calling Hour** 02:00PM - 04:00PM

**6**

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Drozdal Funeral Home

120 Damon Rd, Northampton, MA, US, 01060

**JUN** **Liturgy** 10:00AM

**7**

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Most Holy Redeemer Church

Russell St., Hadley, MA, US, 01035

# Comments

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“ Betty and I taught together, first at Hooker School and then at Hadley Elementary. All during that time I was impressed by her love of teaching and her love of learning. There wasn't anything she wouldn't do to help her students succeed. She was my mentor, my friend and someone I always looked up to. How lucky her first graders were to have Betty as a teacher, and how lucky was I to have known her.  
Margie Strauss

**Margie Strauss** - June 04, 2021 at 10:05 PM

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“ Betty was truly a remarkable person. She taught all three of my children, sharing a birthday with my son. Everything mentioned in her obituary is true! Heaven has gained a saint for sure!  
Kris Waskiewicz and family

**kristine waskiewicz** - June 03, 2021 at 07:48 AM

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“ Betty was my teacher best friend i cant believe yr gone you wrote most kindest words about ne you were so welcoming yr smile was contagious may you rest in enteral heaven i love you teacher janine kozlakowski

**Janine kozlakowski** - June 02, 2021 at 02:20 PM