



Kathleen "Digger" Bemben

August 31, 1950 - September 13, 2025

Kathleen A. "Digger" Bemben, 75, of Hadley, passed away on Saturday, September 13, 2025, at Cooley Dickinson Hospital surrounded by her family and friends. She was born in Northampton on August 31, 1950, to the late Frederick and Irene (Szostak) Bemben.

Kathy was a graduate of Hopkins Academy and later pursued her career after receiving a bachelor's degree from Bay Path University and UMass Amherst. She worked for several years at the Valley Advocate as a supervisor and more recently because of her love for animals she volunteered her time as a caretaker for an animal sanctuary in California.

She had a great fondness for horses and all animals, for music, and for Harley Davidson and Triumph motorcycles. She played bass in several bands including The Judy Hensler Band, and loved watching Leave It To Beaver and Gunsmoke reruns. Kathy will truly be missed by her family and her many friends.

She is survived by her brother Peter Bemben and his wife Jacqui Zuzgo of Hadley, brothers-in-law, Paul Zabawa of Los Angeles, CA, and Kevin Zabawa and his wife Deirdre of Longmeadow, sisters-in-law, Sharyn Hocuscak and her husband Steve of Sterling, Dianne Sutherland and her husband Don of Agawam, her nephews, Patrick Bemben and his wife Carolyn, Andrew

Bemben and his fiancée, Mary Ellie, Ned and Malcolm Zabawa, and nieces, Torrie Sutherland, Stacy Hocurscak, Nicole and Amanda Zabawa, and many dear friends.

Besides her parents, she was predeceased by her husband David L. Zabawa.

Burial will be Friday October 10, 2025, at 11 AM in Holy Rosary Cemetery, Hadley. DROZDAL FUNERAL HOME OF NORTHAMPTON has been entrusted with her services. A Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Kathy's memory to the Franklin County Dog Shelter, 10 Sandy Ln., Turners Falls, MA 01376, or to the Hadley Food Pantry C/O Most Holy Redeemer Parish, 120 Russell ST., Hadley, MA 01035.

For more information or to leave the family a personal condolence, please visit Drozdalfuneralhome.com.

Previous Events

Burial

OCT **10**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Holy Rosary Cemetery
Huntington Rd.
Hadley, MA 01035
<http://mhrhadley.org>

Tribute Wall

JW

“ Kathleen "Digger" Bemben, was a classmate of mine from grade school to graduation from Hopkins Academy. She had endless energy in doing the things she loved to do-while in high school, she immersed herself into playing the drums in band, singing in the Glee Club and also in the Church choir, student council and working on the yearbook. My fondest memories were playing basketball; she was number 12 and I was number 21 and we were the fiercest opponents. Her fondness for horses and all animals was unmeasurable. She was a very kind, caring and generous person. "Digger"
"Pani" you will be missed greatly by your numerous friends, colleagues and family.

Joanne Wanczyk - October 09, 2025 at 01:54 PM

LS

“ To family and friends of 'Digger.' Sending comfort and prayer. We worked together ten years at the Valley Advocate, first in Amherst, then Hatfield, Mass. I have never met anyone like her. So much energy and resourcefulness. Our jobs were very busy, but she always found a way to bring a sense of humor to any situation. Over the years, we found a way to catch up on life and 'news' during our brief under-five-minute meetings at the copy machine or in the break room. Rare lunch breaks at the pub next to the auto body shop down the street were special. Especially when they served 'bigos,' a Polish bean and cabbage dish which Digger introduced me to. We were even there having lunch together with a table full of coworkers during the 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster in 1986. We never really hung out outside of work, but I can say we became very good friends. It was Digger's friendly attitude, concern and care for others that stands out in my memory. Digger brought out the best in people. I was happy to know her.

Leah Sullivan - October 08, 2025 at 10:57 AM

KI

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Kit - October 03, 2025 at 02:37 AM

WB

“ *Kathy in grade school, "Digger" from high school onward. What a gift to be in her presence as she brought us all together with her smile, joy, and kindness.*

I had the good fortune of being a classmate of "Digger's" at Hooker School, Russell School, and Hopkins Academy. She, being a Bemben and I being a Buckhout, we started each day of school together sitting next to each other in every one of our homerooms through out school years.. What a great start to each school day!

Strong people create good times. For the class of 1968, "Digger" kept us all together with her efforts for class reunions, while keeping up with with many of us as our lives took different directions. Those Young Men's club reunions are wonderful memories for each us along with a huge appreciation as what she had done for all of us.

Her end of life took on many challenges for her to tackle. Through the grace of God, Digger was comforted with wonderful friends, family and her love of horses and all animals.

May God greet you with open arms. RIP Wayne Buckhout

Wayne Buckhout - October 02, 2025 at 09:37 PM

“ *In Loving Memory of Digger*

Digger was the kind of person you never forget—full of fire, laughter, and kindness. She had a wild love for life, whether she was riding fast on her bike, laughing over a good joke, or bonding with animals in a way only she could. Horses were her heart, the sea was her soul, and animals of all kinds were her constant companions.

She was a true original—quick to laugh, even quicker to help. Her firecracker personality made life more exciting, and her generous heart made the world better. Whether she was volunteering at the animal shelter or lending a hand at the food pantry, Digger gave her time and love freely, never expecting anything in return.

One of her favorite sayings was “O cholera!”—a perfectly dramatic expression she’d throw out whenever something surprised her or made her laugh. It became her signature—something we’ll all hear in our minds whenever life throws us a curveball. And we’ll smile, just like she would.

Digger was humble, full of life, and always ready with a joke or a helping hand. What we’ll miss most is the way she made life feel like an adventure, the way she made people feel seen and loved, and that fierce spark in her that could never be dimmed.

Ride free, Digger. We love you, we miss you, and we’ll carry your light—and your “O cholera!”—with us always.