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**Velna Jane Kolodziej** 5-26-2017



Velna Jane Kolodziej (nee Lewis) was born on May 14, 1932, to Jackson and Helen (Hunt) Lewis in Chicago. She passed away on Saturday, May 20, 2017, at the age of 85. She was raised in Norwood Park, Illinois, and graduated Taft High School in 1950. She attended Northern Illinois University where she attained a teaching degree.

She was an elementary school teacher in Arlington Heights, Illinois, until her marriage to George Kolodziej in 1968. She continued working as a library aid and computer teacher in Oak Park, Illinois, and River Forest, Illinois, while

raising four sons: Gary Mertens, Paul Mertens, Matthew Kolodziej and David Kolodziej.

Velna moved with George to Grinnell, Iowa, to a welcoming community at the Mayflower in the summer of 2014. She was involved in the Third Unitarian Church in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago, PFLAG (a gay and lesbian parents and friends support group) and numerous activities at the Mayflower in Grinnell.

She is survived by her four sons and their children, Rita Mertens, Jane Mertens, Ellis Mertens, George E. Kolodziej, Molly Kolodziej, Sophie Kolodziej, and Avalon Von Mertens.

A Celebration of Life in Grinnell is scheduled for 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 17, at the Carman Center at the Mayflower Community.