

Joan C. Butler Cavagna

Joan Carol Butler Cavagna, a 1957 graduate of Northwest High School, was born in 1939 and raised in the town of Lonedell until her family moved to Cedar Hill at the end of second grade. She was one of eight students who graduated from Cedar Hill Elementary at the Lion's Hall in House Springs, who joined up with students from other elementary schools throughout the district to form the first freshman class of Northwest High School. The first year they had three rooms in the basement of House Springs Elementary. The second year they had an additional three rooms upstairs. In her Junior year they moved into what is now the old high school, Northwest Valley. The class was so small that graduation took place in the gymnasium, with the graduates sitting on the stage.

During her years at Northwest, she was a member of the Big River Promenaders, a square dance group which danced all over the St. Louis area as well as on the Grand Ole Opry. She was also a member of the Glee Club, Pep Club, and worked on the school yearbook as editor her last year. She also worked on the school newspaper, helped decorate for the first prom and was a member of the Honor Society the last two years of high school. The teachers she remembers the most were Lillian McDaniel, history teacher; Forest Koch, great math teacher; and James McNamee, who taught business classes.

Joan started working at age 16 at the House Springs Park and Pool concession stand in the summer of 1955. After graduation, she went to work at Fenton Bank as a bookkeeper from 1957-1959. Then she went to work for General Electric Finance, for 16 years. After GE closed in St. Louis, she went to work for ITT Commercial Finance, which was later bought out by Deutsche Financial Services. While working at Deutsche Financial, Joan was involved with creating the Adopt-a-Family program, which worked with Feed My People every year to shop for families at Christmas. Joan retired after 22 years from Deutsche Financial in 2001. She also worked as a supervisor part-time for St. Louis Soccer Park for a total of 22 years.

Joan also joined the Masonic organization Job's Daughters International at age 15, and was Honored Queen at age 16. She remains a Charter Member and third Honored Queen of Bethel # 43 in Fenton. Both daughters, Debbie Barron (1979) and Suzanne Cavagna (1989), were also Honored Queens. In later years, she sat on the council as Secretary and served as a Deputy for the Grand Guardian Council of Missouri. She also served as Grand Librarian. Her son, Glen, (1977) was a member of Progression Order of DeMolay, another Masonic youth group. Joan served as President of the Mother's Club during his term as Master Councilor. She was also a Deputy for the State's Mother' Club.

Joan married her husband, John, in August, 1958. They raised their three children in High Ridge, and all still live in the St. Louis area. They traveled every summer with their family, visiting different parts of the country and seeing every state but 2. They also visited Mexico and the Bahamas. Before the pandemic, Joan traveled to France and Belgium with her two daughters and good friend to spend time with Cedric Declerck, who was an exchange student from France and graduated from Northwest in 1989 with Suzanne. She also enjoyed traveling with her good

friend, Bev, usually 2-3 trips a year with Rockwood Bank. Joan and John also celebrated 60 years of marriage.

Joan's family joined St. Martin United Church of Christ in High Ridge in the early 70's. Over the years, she served as a Deacon, was chairperson for the Fundraising Committee, a member of the LCM Committee, a member of the Women's Fellowship, and was volunteer Secretary. She also served on the Personnel and Worship Committees. She worked with planning children's events such as the Easter egg hunt, Christmas parties, and vacation bible school. She also helped coordinate funeral lunches when needed. She also served on the Search Committee for a new pastor for the church.

Joan was active in organizing the High Ridge Khoury League. She served as Secretary for several years. She was also involved with the purchase of the ball fields off of Antire Road.

Joan and John joined the Show Me Corvair Club in late 1979. She's held the positions of Secretary, News Letter Chair, and just completed a two-year term as President. They enjoyed traveling over many years with the club to various events.

Joan was also very active with Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts when her kids were little. She served as a Brownie and Girl Scout Leader, and also as a Boy Scout Den Mother.

Joan has helped Feed My People with their Christmas distribution for many years. She also goes with her church to help with Christmas caroling.

In 2009, Joan was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the Northwest Classes of 1957, 1958 and 1959 in recognition of her hard work, endless hours of research, phone calls, computer time, organization skills, hospitality and dedication in organizing the class reunion for these three classes, which is held annually. Joan also organized the monthly lunches for whoever can get together to catch up. She updated members of the classes on any news relating to classmates and teachers, and kept track of everyone's whereabouts to update everyone.

Joan passed away in May of 2021, but is fondly remembered by her friends, family, and classmates. Joan always credited her many relationships, friends and community involvement to her high school years and beyond at Northwest High School. Joan's legacy is the positive impact she has had on so many, most certainly befitting of the Distinguished Alumni Award.