



Joy Esther Richards

July 20, 1942 - June 27, 2023

Joy Esther Richards (nee Leming), 80, passed away peacefully at home after a long battle with cancer.

Born in Oak Park, IL, Joy graduated from Proviso Township High School, where she met the love of her life, Charles “Chick” Richards. Chick was playing ping pong with her brother in their family’s basement. Joy said she knew he was the one for her the moment they met. They married not long after and honeymooned on Washington Island, Wisconsin, where Chick’s family lived.

Joy received a bachelor’s degree at the University of Illinois and went on to get an MSW from Jane Addams College of Social Work. During graduate school Joy became a mother to her only child, Eve, and she was overjoyed to become a mom.

Joy worked for Lutheran Social Services and former Chicago mayor Jane Byrne’s office. After obtaining her LCSW she opened a private practice and then went on to St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, IL, where she became the director of an outpatient drug and alcohol rehabilitation center.

Joy was a gifted clinician and leader.

Joy was a “Friend of Bill W” for over four decades. She was a program sponsor to many and helped found several meetings. Being a part of this fellowship of recovery was sacred to her. Joy was an activist. She believed deeply in equal rights for all. She fought to better the world alongside many Chicago luminaries; she campaigned for Harold Washington and Barack Obama and participated in countless marches for her causes. Joy leaves behind a legacy of hard work and dedication to improving the lives of others.

Joy was a lover of nature and contemplative solitude. She enjoyed being on “the Island” with family and friends, camping in her field, riding her bike, and letting her dogs frolic and play.

Joy was deeply engaged in spiritual practice. She studied and meditated daily with humble devotion. She was a member of Unity Church in Chicago and loved to attend Taizé services.

Joy was a friend for life. Her beautiful smile, kind demeanor, creativity, and generosity of spirit drew in many friends who she held close. In recent years, Joy organized a group of women, affectionately called “The Posse,” who had weekly dinners at her home. This group became loving hub of camaraderie and support.

In her last years, all the love and devotion Joy brought to the world was reflected back to her.

Joy was an unconditionally loving mother to Eve (Brit) Creelman and adoring “Nana” to granddaughter Vivian Creelman. Joy leaves behind brother Warren (Laura Weathered) Leming, sister-in-law Norene (Ben) Lindsay, nieces and nephews, and many cherished friends. She was preceded in death by beloved husband Charles “Chick” James Richards, parents Esther Maud Leming (Ewing) and Roy Edward Leming, and brother Garrett Leming.

A celebration of life is being planned. Please check back to this website for information as it becomes available.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her name to Indivisible Chicago Alliance: www.indivisiblechicago.com Or to Trueblood Performing Arts Center on Washington

Island: www.tpacwashingtonisland.com/

Tribute Wall

DZ

“ On your Birthday, Dear Joy, I am grateful for the loving and beautiful presence you and Beloved Chick were in my Mom's (Pat Zak) life and in my own. Knowing we will all be together again and are always in God's infinite care, allows me to hold close and trust that everything is well every moment and as it should be. Much love and sincere condolences to Eve and the entire scope of Family and Friends who were touched by your incredible Light and will miss you here. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, Joy. You were instrumental in my healing journey and you are loved forever.
~Diana Zak and Nick Beaton

Diana Zak - July 20, 2023 at 04:21 PM

PS

“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Pamela Schneider - July 11, 2023 at 02:16 PM

DP

“ Joy was, simply, a great gift to my life- and to the world

Dina Petrakis - July 01, 2023 at 08:48 AM

BC

“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Brit Creelman - June 30, 2023 at 09:57 PM

ER

“ Joy brought kindness, patience, empathy, to a harsh and often unforgiving world. She taught by example. She was both my sister-in-law and sister and the landscape without her is so much lonelier.
Eugenie

Eugenie Ross-Leming - June 30, 2023 at 06:22 PM

WL

She was then and now my Angel whose love and compassion were open to all. We will not see her like again. Warren Leming

warren leming - July 01, 2023 at 10:24 PM

AC

“ Heartfelt condolences and love to the family of this beautiful soul who brought Joy to so many. I feel blessed to have been a part of her extended family through my brother Brit, Joy's son in law. She welcomed my brother wholeheartedly and all of us CREELMAN's into the family fold and embraced us all. May you rest in peace and Grace, dear Joy.

Aimee Creelman - June 30, 2023 at 06:09 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - June 30, 2023 at 05:38 PM

WL

She was my Angel We will not see her like again Warren Leming

warren leming - July 01, 2023 at 11:07 PM