



Laura Ann Zalmezak

July 1, 1954 - October 25, 2020

Laura Ann Zalmezak (Duchene) died unexpectedly at home on Sunday, October 25, 2020 in New Baltimore, MI at the age of 66. Fittingly her husband of 48 years, Joseph Zalmezak, was by her side caring for her until the very end.

Joe's "Sweezy" was his best friend. She was the love of his life. He knew she was the one the day he met her cruising Joseph Campau Avenue in Hamtramck, MI in 1970.

Her children, who she loved dearly, mourn her loss: Paul Zalmezak (Evanston, IL), Colleen Rocha (Ponte Vedra, FL), and Renee Zalmezak (Apple Valley, MN). Her guiding spirit throughout this illness was her late daughter, Leslie Gillette who preceded her in death in 2018.

Her grandchildren adored their Grandma. She was there for them at the very beginning of their lives, traveling to meet each of them within hours of their births. Her strength and resilience will hopefully be one of the traits she passed onto her nine grandchildren; Cody Grimes, Cameron Ilich, Amber Rocha, William Zalmezak, Alex Zalmezak, Alexa Rocha, Keira Ilich, Cassidy Gillette, and Caden Gillette.

Her struggle with her illness earned her the nickname "Savage Trooper" from

her daughter-in-law Lara Zalmezak (Walters). Her son-in-law Glenn Rocha opened his home for lengthy visits to Florida from grandma. And Mat Gillette, her late daughter's husband, did his best to continue visiting with the youngest grandkids, the "babies" as she called them.

She is survived by siblings Dennis Duchene of Marlette, MI, Irene French of Roseville, MI, and David Duchene of Madison Heights, MI. Preceding in her death were siblings Carol Burns and Richard Duchene. Also mourning her loss is her nephew Dale Duchene, an honorary Zalmezak sibling and Sarah Moberg, whom she and her husband considered an "adopted" daughter over the last 18 years.

Laura had the misfortune of being diagnosed with Pancreatic Cancer in April of 2019. She appreciated the doctors who helped give her another year of life. She was in awe of Dr. David Kwon, and thankful for Dr. Gazala Khan, Dr. Parag Parikh, and the entire Henry Ford Medical staff. She was especially thankful for the special care provided by Physician Assistant Celina Kirsch. Celina was a big part of her life this year.

We will all remember Christmases and birthdays overflowing with gifts, family celebrations including early 1980s basement dance parties, and the kitchen filled with homemade goodies. She loved being home and spending time making it look fit for HGTV - always seeking just the right furnishing or accessory.

Laura's surviving family will not let her illness she fought so hard to overcome define her. The way she lived her life provided an example for us all. Love your family. Love one another. That is life's purpose. She lived purposely. Her family will plan to celebrate that lesson in June 2021 during what would have been her 49th wedding anniversary and her 67th birthday.

Until then, please consider honoring her with a small donation to:

The Henry Ford Health System Catherine M. Prince Cancer Relief fund to help cancer patients with the ancillary expenses associated with cancer treatment:

<https://www.henryford.com/development/impact-stories/catherine-prince-fund>

or

The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network helps with research, clinical initiatives, patient services and advocacy

https://secure.pancan.org/site/Donation2?3200.donation=form1&df_id=3200&mfc_pref=T

Tribute Wall



“ Thinking of you all and wishing that time will heal the sadness in your hearts, and the beautiful memories will fill you with love.

November 07, 2020 at 12:00 AM



“ Laura was a strong and beautiful woman. Her inner strength, courageous fight and unwavering faith were valuable lessons she gave to us all. Laura's true love and passion was her Joe, her children and her sweet grandchildren. Memories of Laura's smile, charm, kindness and concern for others will never be forgotten. Miss you, dear cousin. ❤️🙏 Jim & Marge

November 01, 2020 at 12:00 AM



“ I just want to say goodbye to my loving neighbor she use to always call us her angel neighbors and now she is our angel neighbor till we meet again you will be deeply missed. Love your angel neighbors

October 28, 2020 at 12:00 AM