



Joan B Williams

October 18, 1929 - May 24, 2025

Joan Williams passed in her sleep, though she would probably claim, somewhat irritably, she was "just resting her eyes;" at age 95.

Born in Carlisle, PA during the stock market crash that signaled the Great Depression in 1929, Joan was the youngest daughter of the Cumberland County Pennsylvania Sheriff, Lloyd, and his wife, Alice Bender, an educator and homemaker.

Obtaining her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from East Stroudsburg and Penn State Universities respectively, she began teaching Physical Education and Health in Hightstown, NJ. This is where she met Jack Williams, an English teacher and coach.

A shared experience with the legal/corrections system was an early bond: baby Joan lived at the jail during the time her father was sheriff; her sitters were those incarcerated for drunkenness, prostitution, and other petty crimes related to the Depression. Jack lived at the New Jersey State Home for Boys (reform school) while his father was employed there as a printing/graphics teacher. They wed in 1955, and remained married until his death in 2015.

Growing up in the Joan's household meant being immersed in music. When Meet the Beatles was released in 1964, the windows rattled and the sound

was heard down the block. Chicago, Fleetwood Mac, America, Carole King, James Taylor, and Burt Bacharach, as well as vintage Ella, Frank Sinatra, and Johnny Mathis. The boys grew up deaf, but happy. Tom took Mom to many concerts and though not as loud as her home stereo "concerts," she loved seeing the performers.

Mrs. Williams taught 4th Grade at F.L. Walther School in Lumberton, NJ, retiring from that position in 1991. She was one of the earliest recipients of the Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. She was Lumberton's Teacher of the Year in 1987. Many of her students continued to check in with her through the years; some were inspired to enter the field of education because of her enjoyable, effective style of teaching.

Miniature Schnauzers were many and were constant companions right up until Joan's departure.

The family remembers Joan was almost never sick. A total of two colds were recalled by the family during her lifetime. She attributed this to "clean living."

Joan loved retirement, which allowed her to concentrate on tennis, the Nittany Lions, and the Philadelphia Eagles. She took tennis lessons for years at Westwood Swim Club, at Mill Dam, and in Medford, and played in various summer and indoor winter leagues with her friends from surrounding towns. U.S. Open Tennis Championships and The Championships, Wimbledon were seen in-person.

When tennis became less fun, Joan loved lunching with her tennis and other friends at Charley's Other Brother, Robin's Nest, and Zinc.

She was a pioneer of healthy eating for her family, but her favorite foods were pizza and cherry pie à la Breyer's. A later thrill was the discovery of Indian,

Thai, and Middle Eastern cuisines. A gourmet and gourmand, she remained the same size she'd been prior to her pregnancies, as she loved to remind others. She was a tremendous baker, and there was nearly always something in the oven for the family, a new neighbor, or an unwell friend. Although she loved dining out, she was rewarded more by cooking and baking for others.

A lover of politics and its intrigue, MSNBC's hosts were often with Joan through the day and evening. She was a voracious reader of biographies and novels as well. Always clipping curated Philadelphia Inquirer articles for family and friends, "Read and toss" was often written at the top.

Pre-deceased by her husband, Jack, and her sisters Jean Highberger and Col. Lorraine Watkins. Survived by her sons, Timothy (Allison) of eastern Long Island, and Tom of Delran, NJ. Rudi the Schnauzer, of Mt. Holly. Niece Alison Highberger (Dan Weig) of Bend OR, and their son Nick. Nephew Craig Highberger of Georgia. Also, niece Faye Perdoni of Jacksonville, Florida and nephews Louis and Mark (Louisa) Perdoni and their children of Minnesota and Clinton, NJ respectively.

Special thanks to Joan's caring, dedicated team: Precy and Lilian (who were there in her last months), as well as Jennie, Gloria, and Emi. Samaritan Hospice assisted in final weeks and was quite helpful and compassionate.

A Celebration of Life (and pizza) will be held in the fall. Contact Tom at towi61@yahoo.com for details.

In lieu of flowery offerings, please consider donating to one of the following non-profit animal welfare groups:

Marine Mammal Stranding Center, Brigantine NJ: <https://mmssc.org/>

Friends of the Burlington County Animal Shelter (no kill) : <https://friendsofbcas.org/support/donate/>

Animal Welfare Association, Voorhees: <https://www.awanj.org/>

Tribute Wall

CJ

“ Mrs. Williams was my 4th grade teacher and definitely my favorite. She and I kept in contact well after 4th grade, communicating through letters. I had to laugh when I was reading the obituary and it talked about how she’d clip different stories from the newspaper. She knew I was a huge Mike Schmidt fan, so anything in the news about him was usually clipped and put into the letter that she sent me. The other part of the letter that I always enjoyed would be the questions she’d ask me in the letter. It always felt like we were having a conversation. One of the coolest things she did was when I was a junior in high school, she drove up to central jersey to watch me play in our State Championship Baseball game. I so appreciated her making the time to come up and watch. Mrs. Williams was truly an incredible person and someone that touched my life positively. I still don’t use the word “good” in incorrect situations as she taught me that I was supposed to use “well”. She was the best and I’m really thankful I had an opportunity to know her!

Craig Jones - August 28, 2025 at 04:04 PM

PB

“ My condolences to the family. Mrs. Williams was my 4th grade teacher and also my favorite. She was a wonderful, kind and caring person. I would see her once in a while at the grocery store and she never forgot who I was. May she rest in peace. God bless!

Paula Cavallero Budden - June 02, 2025 at 03:36 PM

JH

“ I played many games of tennis with Joan and I knew that she always baked blueberry muffins for her boys.
She was such fun!
Judy Hawkins

Judt Hawkins - June 02, 2025 at 07:51 AM



Thanks, Judy!

Tom Williams - June 03, 2025 at 07:33 AM

KK

“ *One of my favorite teachers! I don't ever remember her raising her voice. I have no doubt she touched many lives in a positive way!*

Kelly Brayton Klemmer - May 31, 2025 at 11:26 PM

AR

“ *Mrs. Williams was like a second mother to me whenever I went over to their house as a kid. When I last saw her in my 50's, she said I could call her Joan. I just couldn't do that. She will always Mrs. Williams to me.*
Allen Russakow

Allen Russakow - May 31, 2025 at 11:45 AM

CH

“ *Deepest condolences cousins Tim and Tom. Aunt Jo was such a loving wonderful person, you got the best mother of all the Bender sisters. So sad she is gone, but we all have such wonderful memories of your parents. xoxo Cousin Craig*

Craig Highberger - May 31, 2025 at 08:07 AM

CB

“ *My condolences and prayers to the Williams family. Mrs Williams was my favorite teacher at FLWalther.*

Christina Thurman Brooks - May 29, 2025 at 09:23 PM

JH

“ My favorite teacher ever (Jack was my second favorite!). Kind, thoughtful and compassionate to EVERY child. They should name the teacher of the year award after her. I think of her from time to time to this day. My condolences to the family. I'm glad that you got to enjoy her company as long as you did.

John halapchuk - May 29, 2025 at 03:46 PM



I really liked Mrs. Williams. Had her in the 4th grade. Very kind and patient. Ironically, I had Mr. Williams as well for homeroom at RV.

Wayne Robbins - May 29, 2025 at 05:25 PM

KH

“ Katherine Chandler Houghtaling lit a candle in memory of Joan B Williams



Katherine Chandler Houghtaling - May 29, 2025 at 02:53 PM

KH

Rest in peace Mrs. Williams. You were one of my favorite teachers .

Katherine Chandler Houghtaling - May 29, 2025 at 02:55 PM

WG

“ Mrs. Williams was a favorite customer of mine when I worked at Sacks Shoes thru high school. Such a nice person. My condolences to her two sons...

Wade Garner - May 29, 2025 at 01:56 PM



Thanks, Wade. Great memories on those days.

Tom Williams - May 29, 2025 at 05:55 PM

AM

“ *Amy lit a candle in memory of Joan B Williams*



amy - May 29, 2025 at 12:16 PM

AM

“ *Ms Williams was one of my fav teachers in lumberton she thought me a lot gave good advice and was there when I needed to talk I will never forget her ms Williams I will keep u in my heart and prayers always may u rest in peace love ur student Amy Collom*

amy - May 29, 2025 at 12:15 PM

PE

“ *5 files added to the album Joan's Album*



Perinchief - May 29, 2025 at 11:59 AM