



Florence Irene Nowak

January 27, 1940 - March 29, 2026

Buffalo, New York

Florence Irene Nowak died in Buffalo on March 29, 2026. She was eighty-six. Born there on January 27, 1940, on the East Side, she grew up in a house where Polish was for the kitchen and English was for the street, and she kept both. She became a nurse because the hospital was hiring and because she had already learned, at home, how to stand next to pain without making it a performance.

She spent most of her working life at a county hospital that did not look like the brochures. Nights, weekends, the hallway that smelled of antiseptic and coffee. She was the nurse who taught new aides that a call light is not an interruption. She retired later than she meant to because the floor was short and she did not like leaving a shift in worse shape than she found it. She never put RN on her checks. She put her name.

She married Stanley Nowak in 1962. He worked at the plant until the plant became a story people told about other decades. They raised a son and a daughter in a double that needed a new porch every twenty years. Stanley died in 2011. Florence kept the garden of tomatoes against the garage and the habit of bringing kolaczki to the nurses who had once been her students. She watched the Bills with a loyalty that did not require winning, and she could walk to the Broadway Market in her sleep.

Friends remember a woman who would sit with a stranger's mother until the daughter arrived from Rochester, who hated a messy med cart, and who said "we're fine" in a way that actually meant the work would get done. She died in Buffalo, in a late-winter week that still had snow in the shade. The lake wind continues. She always said that was the city's way of telling you to button your coat and go to work anyway.

Services

A funeral Mass on the East Side, then a reception with coffee and sweets. A gift to a hospital auxiliary or nursing scholarship is welcome.

NN-OBIT-2026-C008

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