



Josephine Marie Kubiak

November 22, 1943 - September 8, 2026

Chicago, Illinois

Josephine Marie Kubiak died in Chicago on September 8, 2026. She was eighty-two. Born there on November 22, 1943, on the Southwest 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 cleaner for the transit authority because the job was hiring and because she had already learned, at home, how to leave a room better than she found it.

She spent thirty years on night crews that emptied cars and stations people only noticed when they were dirty. She taught new hires that a gum scraper is not an insult. She retired later than she meant to because the barn was short and she did not like leaving a shift in worse shape than she found it. After that she ran a parish kitchen that fed whoever came, and she treated a government cheese block as a problem of seasoning, not a humiliation.

She married Stanley Kubiak in 1964. 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 bungalow that needed a new porch every twenty years. Stanley died in 2010. Josephine kept the garden of tomatoes against the garage and the habit of bringing paczki to the women who had once been her students. She watched the Sox with a loyalty that did not require winning.

Friends remember a woman who would sit with a stranger's mother until the daughter arrived from Joliet, who hated a messy mop closet, and who said "we're fine" in a way that actually meant the work would get done. She died in Chicago, in a late-summer week that still had heat in the brick. 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 Southwest Side, then a reception with coffee and sweets. A gift to a parish pantry or a

transit auxiliary is welcome.

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