



Karen Elizabeth Bunting

March 7, 1941 - January 19, 2026

Karen Elizabeth Bunting
(née Stewart)

Karen Elizabeth (Stewart) Bunting passed away at Riverside Hospital on January 19, 2026, with her family by her side. Born March 7, 1941, in Chicago to Alexander and Mary Stewart, she lived there until age twelve before returning to Braidwood, Illinois. On February 26, 1958, Karen married the love of her life, Jackie L. Bunting; they shared 52 years together and raised four children in Braidwood until Jack's passing in 2000.

Karen spent the early years of her marriage focused on raising her children. In 1976, she started working as a CNA at Morris Hospital in Morris, Illinois. Through her dedication to healthcare, she earned several promotions and later retired from her role as ICU ward clerk so she could care for Jack during his final months. Karen also used her medical skills with the newly formed Braidwood Volunteer Fire Department Ambulance Service, working alongside her husband. She became one of the first women to serve as both firefighter and ambulance crew in the Braidwood Volunteer Fire Department. After Jack's passing, Karen spent several years caring for homebound older adults, helping them get to appointments and assisting with other needs requested by their families.

Karen was a woman of many firsts. She played a pivotal role in establishing the Braidwood Fire Sirens, the women's auxiliary organization supporting the fire department through fundraising, providing meals during fires, and

assisting families displaced by emergencies. As a founding member of the Braidwood Historical Society, Karen was instrumental in preserving local heritage; her efforts with the city ensured the relocation and preservation of the historic Train Depot, which now serves as the home of the Historical Society. Renowned for her knowledge of Braidwood's past, she became a trusted source for stories about the town's early years. Additionally, during Jack's tenure as Police Chief, Karen became the first female officer sworn into the Braidwood Police Department, where she assisted with the supervision of female prisoners.

Karen loved to travel, and Clearwater Beach, Florida became her special retreat. She shared her love for the beach with both her children and grandchildren, creating cherished memories during their family vacations there. Karen was fortunate enough to visit Scotland with her close friends, Wayne and Roberta Kilpatrick, along with their family. After Jack passed away, she spent many winters in Florida with Wayne and Roberta.

Karen was deeply committed to her faith, dedicating 75 years to the First Presbyterian Church of Braidwood and giving her time generously to both the congregation and the broader community. She played a key role in launching Garage Sales Days, helped at Summerfest, supported Vacation Bible School, and contributed to other initiatives aimed at supporting the church's finances. Karen's children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were a source of pride and joy in her life. She was frequently present at various sporting events—including football, soccer, softball, and little league—supporting whichever member of her family was participating that evening.

Karen is preceded in death by her parents, in-laws, and brother, Russell (Mary) Stewart. Her husband, Jack Bunting, sons David and Matthew Bunting, daughter Jacqueline Ryman, grandsons – JT Hinich, Cody Ryman and Jake Bunting.

Karen is survived by her daughter, Elizabeth (Jay) Dixon of Braidwood, IL. Her grandchildren include Michelle (Derrick Wren) Reddinger of Morris, IL; Adam (Kristi) Roberts of Coal City, IL; Jenae (Allan) Barlan of Sterling, VA; Shelby

(Michael Ashley) O'Reilly of Braidwood, IL; David (Shawna) Bunting of Godley, IL; Heather (Nicholas) Bonarek; Hilary (Michael) Hetelle; Heidi (Josh) Bieback; and Pete (Samantha) Hinich. She is also survived by 20 great-grandchildren. Additionally, Karen leaves behind a special cousin, Stephen (Mary) Wonders, as well as her close friend and partner in crime, Roberta Kilpatrick. She also leaves behind her "Baby", her constant companion for the last several years.

Visitation and a memorial service will take place on January 31, 2026, at RW Patterson Funeral Home in Braidwood, IL 60408. Visitation is scheduled from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with a brief service to follow. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the First Presbyterian Church, 106 S. Lincoln St., Braidwood, IL, in Karen's name. Cremation rites have been accorded.

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

JAN **31**. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (CT)

R.W. Patterson Funeral Home
401 East Main St.
Braidwood, IL 60408
(815) 458-2336
info@rwpattersonfuneralhome.com
<https://www.rwpattersonfuneralhomes.com>

Memorial Service

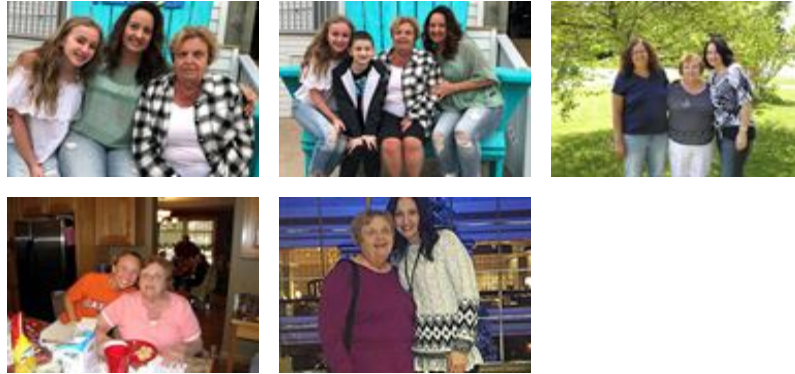
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Tribute Wall



“ 113 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



R W Patterson Funeral Homes, Ltd. - January 29 at 03:11 PM

JB

“ *Judy Bumpous lit a candle in memory of Karen Bunting*



Judy Bumpous - January 24 at 12:53 AM

BB

“ *RIP Karen. Sympathy to family...*

Barbara Bunton - January 23 at 10:59 AM

LW

“ *Karen was a great and fun person to work beside at Morris Hospital. My sympathies to her family*

Laurie Wilkinson - January 23 at 09:33 AM

TM

“ *Your mom was a Great Lady. Sorry for your loss.* ”

Tim Mitchell - January 23 at 09:26 AM

DM

“ *Sorry for your loss!* ”

Don McKinney - January 22 at 02:36 PM

PS

Sorry for your loss

Patricia Swisher - January 24 at 06:49 PM