



Irene M. Bacalis

June 23, 1933 - June 14, 2020

Irene M. Bacalis, known to everyone as “Yiayia”, passed away on June 14, 2020, in Tecumseh, Michigan. She was 86 years old.

Irene was born in Lansing, Michigan on June 23, 1933 to Tom and Panagoula Gikas, graduated Sexton High School (class of '51) and worked for the Michigan High School Athletic Association. On April 15, 1961, Irene was wed to Steven K. Bacalis and moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1964 where they raised their family. She was an active member of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, taught Sunday school for many years and was an active member of their women’s charitable organization, Philoptochos. Irene was a devout Orthodox Christian and worked tirelessly for her church. Irene’s personality was vibrant and infectious.

She had the natural ability to bring people together, and was always the first person to welcome new families into the Greek Orthodox community. Irene was a “people person” and will always be remembered for greeting everyone with “Hi honey!” For 17 years, she worked for the iconic Red Hot Inn in Grand Rapids. Many people have fond memories of Irene taking orders, refilling coffee and stopping for table side chats. She engaged everyone with her beautiful smile and bright eyes and she was always ready with a joke! Irene also was an amazing cook and baker, always willing to share her recipes and to feed anyone who walked through her door. Irene was well known for

making hundreds of Greek pastries for family weddings. Her love of cooking and generosity of spirit could be tasted in every bite. After retiring in 2001, Irene moved to Wheaton, Illinois to be near her children and grandchildren, and there wasn't a day that went by without her seeing them. Family and extended family was of the utmost importance to her and she was truly the family matriarch.

Irene is survived by her loving daughters, Ann (John) Wank of Tecumseh, Michigan, and Tina (Justin) Dohm of Wheaton, Illinois; her four grandchildren, Marianthie, Leah, PJ, and Evie; Brother-in-law, George (Jean) Bacalis; beloved nieces and nephews, George (Sheryl) Sinas, Pam Harwood, Dan (Susan) Sinas, Athena (Scott) Willets, and Quest (Jennifer) Bacalis; as well as her great nieces and nephews and great-great nieces and nephews whom she loved dearly.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Steve Bacalis; parents, Tom and Panagoula Gikas; sisters, Martha Sinas and Stella Gikas. May all of their memories be eternal.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a private funeral will be held on June 18, 2020 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Toledo, Ohio, Fr. Larry Legakis presiding. She will be laid to rest at Evergreen Cemetery in Lansing, Michigan. The burial service will be at 3:00 pm, Thursday. A celebration of her life will be held at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Toledo, Ohio, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, The Alzheimers Association, or Hospice of Lenawee County.

Irene's family is forever grateful for the loving care and comfort provided to her by all of the nurses and assistants whom she loved dearly at Cambrian Assisted Living and Memory Care in Tecumseh, Michigan.

Cemetery Details

Evergreen Cemetery

2600 East Mt. Hope Avenue
Lansing, MI 48910

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 18. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral
740 N. Superior St
Toledo, OH 43604

Service

JUN 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral
740 N. Superior St
Toledo, OH 43604

Tribute Wall

JO

“ *YiaYia was a special friend to my mom at Cambrian. She was so sweet, funny and full of compliments whenever we visited. Rest in peace YiaYia.* ”

Joy - July 27, 2020 at 09:38 AM

AT

“ *Her smile and laugh, her loving spirit, and her sparkling eyes are what I always think of when I think of Thea Irene. What a terrible loss we are all grieving. So kind and welcoming and so interested always to know how we were doing. She raised two incredible daughters and it makes me smile to think how fortunate her 4 grandchildren were to grow up with Yiayia. With much love, Athena* ”

Athena - June 16, 2020 at 02:28 PM

DK

Great memories. She always knew how to make one smile. She never sugar coated anything except her Greek pastries and other sweets.

Dean Koukios - June 17, 2020 at 09:08 PM

DL

I wondered why I hadn't received any more phone calls from you. RIP my friend. I will always remember our years working at the MHSAA with you and the many Greek events you invited me to in Lansing. We celebrated our birthdays on the same day but I would tease you that I was a year younger.

dolores (Zarka) Lake - September 09, 2020 at 05:58 AM