



## Willa J. Kriha

May 16, 1944 - May 27, 2025

Willa Jane Kriha (Earl), 81, passed away peacefully on May 27, 2025, in Columbus, Kansas, the town where she was born on May 16, 1944. Her life was a vibrant tapestry of dedication to family, service to others, and a spirited personality that left a lasting impression on all who knew her.

Willa was the daughter of William and Ruthie Earl of Columbus, Kansas. She graduated from Columbus Community Regional High School and went on to further her education at Pittsburg State University. Her professional journey reflected her strong work ethic and commitment to helping others. Over the years, she held positions at McNally Manufacturing Company, Star Loan Company, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Social Security Administration, and the Economic Security Corporation.

Throughout her life, Willa remained deeply rooted in her Presbyterian faith and was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Joplin, Missouri. She generously volunteered her time at the Community Clinic and Freeman West Hospital in Joplin. A proud member of the Lady Elks of Elks Lodge #501 in Joplin and the Coterie Club of Columbus and PEO of Columbus, where she valued fellowship and service.

Willa was known for her love of walking—an activity that not only kept her active but also gave her time for reflection and connection with nature. Above all else, she cherished the time spent with her family. She adored her husband of 27 years, John Kriha; her son Patrick Martin (Diane) of Houston, Texas; and took immense pride in her grandchildren: Amand Stuff (Paul) of College

Station; Hannah Kavner (Rowan) of Long Beach, California; Tessa Martin of Norman, Oklahoma; Stephen Martin (Macy) of College Station; Megan Mullins (Schuyler) of Burleson, Texas; and Madison Emge of Houston, Texas.

Her legacy continues through her great-grandchildren: Kevin and Lydia Stuff; August and Oliver Kavner; Bowen and Carys Martin; and Adaline Mullins.

Each one carries forward a piece of Willa's warmth and wit.

She was preceded in death by her parents and two beloved sisters: Margaret Old of California and Judy Thompson of Wisconsin.

Those who knew Willa will remember her as the full package—beautiful inside and out, sassy with a sharp sense of humor that could light up any room. Her presence brought joy to countless lives through both quiet acts of kindness and bold expressions of love.

May Willa's memory bring comfort to those who knew and loved her. Willa requested no services, and in place of flowers, please consider donating to the Columbus, Kansas, library.

# Tribute Wall



“ We have wonderful memories of John and Willa at the Joplin Elks Lodge. Sending prayers for peace and comfort.  
Don & Susan Cook

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**Don & Susan Cook** - June 04, 2025 at 12:52 PM