

Elsie Kandrak, 78, teacher ran own nursery school



Elsie A. Kandrak

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Elsie Alberghini Kandrak taught briefly at elementary schools in Connecticut after she graduated from college there. But Mrs. Kandrak dropped out of teaching to raise her four youngsters, daughter Deborah McCracken said.

Then, after moving to South Jersey in 1964, she decided to blend teaching and caring for her children, and ran the Catalina Hills Nursery School in Magnolia for six to 10 preschoolers at a time. She did it from 1968 to 1985, in her converted garage, next to her house.

"I think it was her love for teaching, and then having her own business," McCracken said of the effort. And when the children went on to kindergartens, she said, "the teachers knew they had gone to Mom's nursery school."

On Monday, Aug. 3, Mrs. Kandrak, 78, who had lived with McCracken in Spring City, Chester County, since 2012, died of heart failure at Phoenixville Hospital.

Born in Bridgeport, Conn., she graduated in 1955 from Bassick High School there and in 1959 earned her bachelor's degree at Danbury State Teachers College, now Western Connecticut State University. As part of the Yale-Fairfield Study of Elementary Teaching, a project of Yale University and the Fairfield, Conn., public schools, she was awarded a Ford Foundation fellowship that helped

pay for college. "If she didn't have it," her daughter said, "she wouldn't have been able to go."

Mrs. Kandrak taught fourth grade at the Riverfield School in Fairfield in 1959-60 and sixth grade at the Fairfield Woods School in 1961-62, before interrupting her career for her family. In 1974, McCracken said, Mrs. Kandrak earned a certificate in early childhood education at what is now Rowan University. After closing her nursery school, Mrs. Kandrak taught third grade at St. Agnes School in Blackwood from the early 1990s before retiring in the early 2000s, her daughter said.

A choir member at Holy Ghost Byzantine Catholic Church in South Philadelphia, she was a teacher of religious education classes there for parish children in public schools.

Besides her daughter, Mrs. Kandrak is survived by sons George A. Jr. and Michael; daughter Kim A. Arena; two brothers; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. Her husband, George A. Sr., died in 2011.

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