

Stephanie M. "Estelle" Long

Stephanie M. "Estelle" Naspinski Long, 94, passed away Wednesday after a prolonged struggle with dementia.

Born in Frackville, July 13, 1920, she was a daughter of the last Michael and Catherine Terebienec Naspinski.

She was the ninth of 13 children. When Stephanie was 10, her father passed away, forcing the large family to rely on their industry and ingenuity to survive the Great Depression. While many of her older siblings left school to work in mines and factories in order to support the family, Stephanie and her younger siblings picked and sold huckleberries as their contribution. The hardships of her childhood instilled in Stephanie a sense of determination (what she termed persistence, not stubbornness) that stayed with her through her final days.

Stephanie enjoyed school, especially reading and writing. She served on the Frackville High School yearbook staff before graduating in 1938 and took pride in the fact that she was able to teach her mother to sign her own name. After briefly working at the Flower Hospital in New York City, Stephanie worked at Sears in Pottsville, where she was the top salesperson in the store. There she met her husband-to-be, Willard B. Long, and they were married in 1943.

Willard and Stephanie made their home in Frackville and had four children together. Although she was a busy mother and homemaker, Stephanie's childhood love of reading and writing never waned. She volunteered with the Frackville Free Public Library for more than 40 years. She also composed

several short stories that were published in magazines. She worked hard to instill a love of reading, art and music in her children.

In addition to her literary activities, Stephanie volunteered with her church, St. Ann Roman Catholic Church, Frackville. She donated and arranged flowers for the altar, sang in the choir and cooked meals for special occasions at the rectory.

She also loved to garden. She transformed her yard on Broad Mountain Avenue into a colorful oasis of flowers, leaving Willard a tiny corner for his tomatoes. She generously shared cuttings of her plants with anyone who wanted them. Stephanie did all of her own gardening and yard work, including shoveling her own snow, until she was 89 years old.

Stephanie will be warmly remembered as a gracious hostess who offered visitors an abundance of homemade food, especially pierogies, halupkis and Paska bread, because she never wanted a guest to leave hungry; as a woman with a mischievous sense of humor who sent postcards to strangers because she thought they needed some excitement in their lives; as a hater of the rabbits eating her flowers; as a competitive pinochle player; and as a beloved mother, grandmother and friend.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband, Willard, in 1995; son, Freddy, in 1949; and all of her siblings.

Stephanie is survived by three of her children, Gregory (Mary Louise) Long, Atlanta, Ga., Catherine (Jeff) Sketchley, Pleasanton, Calif., and Stephanie (Shawn) Mehlenbacher, Corvallis, Ore. She is also survived by her three grandchildren, Jamie (Dave)

Steele, Manteca, Calif., Sara Mehlenbacher, Pullman, Wash., and Kurt Mehlenbacher, Boulder, Colo.; great-grandson, Jesse Biesecker, Middletown; nieces and nephews. She is also survived by her best friend of 82 years, Christine Pukas, Frackville.

The family would like to thank the caregivers at Rest Haven nursing home in Schuylkill Haven for their assistance during the last years of Stephanie's life. The family would also like to thank Maryanne Van Horn for her warm visits and companionship.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Tuesday at St. Ann Church, Frackville, with the Rev. Robert Finlan, pastor, as celebrant. Relatives and friends are invited to a visitation from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday and from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. Tuesday at Albert L. Gricoski Funeral Home.

Interment will be in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Englewood/Frackville. Memorial donations can be sent to the Frackville Free Public Library, 56 N. Lehigh Ave., Frackville, PA 17931. Albert L. Gricoski Funeral Home, Frackville, has charge of arrangements. Visit www.gricoskifuneralhome.com.