

Barbara “Barb” Beth Howell Seabury

Barbara Beth Howell Seabury died from cancer on July 8, 2026, at her family’s regenerative farm, surrounded by loved ones. She was 83.



Born in Chicago on October 18, 1943, to William and Dorothy Howell, Barb brought curiosity, discipline, and warmth to every chapter of a full and varied life—as a clinical social worker, a mother, a world traveler, and a farmer.

Barb earned her BA from Mount Holyoke College in 1965 and her MSW from Simmons College in 1967. She worked at a variety of organizations before opening a private practice, first in Jackson and later in Ann Arbor. She was, always, an advocate for the needy and vulnerable, and she gave her career to individuals and families navigating mental illness and trauma. Colleagues and clients knew her as sharp, direct, and deeply invested in their wellbeing. She brought that same steadiness to motherhood.

Barb was a devoted mother, who welcomed three daughters—each born in a different state: New Jersey (Heather), Maryland (Elizabeth), and Michigan (Carolyn), where the family put down lasting roots. Soon after settling in Michigan, Barb and her husband, Brett, bought a farm and built it, over the following decades, into Golden Fleece Farm—home to pasture-raised beef cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens, and even a llama named Obama.

Barb and Brett were married for 59 years, and theirs was a true partnership—built on shared curiosity, shared work, and a shared love of the wider world. Together they traveled to England, China, Germany, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Cuba, Costa Rica, Panama, and twelve cities across Mexico, always eager to learn how other people lived. Closer to home, they built a life around the rhythms of the farm: Barb kept bees for honey, milked Nigerian dwarf goats for cheese, turned wild blackberries and cherries into jam, and helped move a herd of Angus-Hereford cattle across the pastures twice a day, rain or shine, well into her later years.

Barb was also a devoted friend, the kind people called first with good news and hard news alike—generous with her time, quick with her wit, and always genuinely interested in the lives of the people around her. That same warmth extended to her grandchildren, for whom she hosted “Farm Camp” over several summers, passing on her love of animals and the natural world to a new generation.

Barb is survived by her husband, Brett, and her three daughters and their families: Heather Seabury McClean (Sam) and their children, Ben and Sydney; Elizabeth Seabury and her children, Henry and Oliver; and Carolyn Seabury (John) and their children, Clara and June.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Faith in Action (<https://faithinaction1.org/>). A gathering to celebrate Barb’s life will be held in the fall. Arrangements by Staffan-Mitchell Funeral Home, Chelsea.

Photo: provided by Staffan-Mitchell Funeral Home, Chelsea, Michigan.

Sources: Obituary posted by Staffan-Mitchell & Caskey-Mitchell Funeral Homes, Chelsea, Michigan; Alum Association of Mount Holyoke College/In Memoriam Notification; *Mount Holyoke College Class of 1965 50th Reunion Book*, p. 3.

Posted: August 2026.