



Bernadette Victoria Kowalewski Zell

May 18, 1948 - September 22, 2025

Bernadette Victoria Kowalewski Zell, born May 18, 1948, passed away peacefully on September 22, 2025, at the age of 77.

She was the beloved daughter of Viola (“Babci”) and Charles (“Dziadek”) Kowalewski, both immigrants from Poland, who instilled in her the values of family, hard work, and resilience.

On June 11, 1966, Bernadette married the love of her life, Richard Zell. Together they shared nearly six decades of marriage, raising two daughters, Bernadette Elaine Zell and Jennifer Eileen Zell, and building a home filled with love, laughter, and lasting traditions, including her enormous family holiday meals and baking endless trays of cookies, full freezers, shopping trips, and travel. Bernadette’s presence was the heart of every gathering.

Bernadette lived a life of curiosity, creativity, and generosity. She had a brilliant mind and a wide range of talents. She worked for many years at Kentucky State University in both the President’s Office and the Department of Biology, where she formed lifelong friendships, including with her dear friend Crystal and Dr. George W. Brown. Later, she served in the Governor’s Office of Technology, where she played a key role in helping to design eMARS, the state’s financial management system. She also attended medical school at the University of Louisville, pursuing her love of learning and science.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Bernadette was known for her warmth and hospitality. She was an extraordinary cook who loved hosting luncheons for her friends. She enjoyed dining out at restaurants, designing gardens, and surrounding herself with plants. She also had a passion for sewing, needlepoint, crocheting—especially the wonderful potholders she lovingly made—and all forms of crafting. Above all, she found her greatest joy in her family—her children, grandchildren, great-grandson, and loved ones. She is survived by her husband, Richard; her daughters, Bernadette and Eileen; her grandchildren, Jonathan Kelly, Meghan Antle, and Samuel Leveridge; her great-grandson, Benjamin Antle; her sister-in-law and brother-in-law, Bonnie and Ron Hall; her cousin Brian and Linda Chikowski, and her companion, Fritz.

Private services will be held.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy be made to the Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research: <https://www.stopsarcoidosis.org/>

Arrangements are under the direction of Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Tammie lit a candle in memory of Bernadette
Victoria Kowalewski Zell*



Tammie - October 02, 2025 at 11:15 AM