



## Ardythe A. Browning

March 17, 1929 - October 8, 2025

Ardythe Arlene (Machesney) Browning passed peacefully from this life at her home the afternoon of October 8, 2025. Although we miss her enormously, we are grateful that she is no longer suffering the debilitating effects of Progressive Supranuclear Palsy and she is now at peace. Ardythe was the eldest of two daughters, born March 17, 1929 to James H. and Pearl R. (Pettitt) Machesney in rural Annawan, Illinois. As a child of the Great Depression, she attended the one room Burns School in rural Annawan through the eighth grade, wearing dresses her mother made from seed sacks. She attended Annawan High School where she was an outstanding student, an accomplished painter, and a musician who played the saxophone in the school band. Following graduation from Annawan High School in 1947, Ardythe attended Western Illinois State Teachers College (now Western Illinois University) with her high school sweetheart, Dean Browning, and graduated in the spring of 1951 with a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics Education. Ardythe and Dean married June 23, 1951 at the Fairview United Brethren Church in Annawan.

Seeking employment together was challenging in the early 1950s because school districts would not hire married couples. Undeterred, they both applied for employment in the Alton School District, and following a special board meeting, Dean and Ardythe were both hired and began their teaching careers in Alton, Illinois. The two of them accomplished a number of 'firsts' - They were

the first married couple hired by the Alton School District, the first married couple to teach in the same building and the first married couple to be central office administrators.

Ardythe started out teaching Tailoring and Clothing Construction and sponsored Future Homemakers of America for many years. While she was teaching, she completed her Master's in Education at the University of Illinois in 1957. In 1975 Ardythe accepted the position of Food Service Director with the Alton School District and maintained this position until her retirement in 1988. She served as President of the Illinois School Food Service Association from 1984-85. It was during that time Ardythe testified before the U.S. Congress, in defense of school lunch funding. She spoke knowledgeably on the importance of proper nutrition, sufficient food for school children and the impact it had on their ability to learn. Ardythe retired in 1988, after 37 years in the Alton School District,

Ardythe loved people and being of service to others. Following her retirement, she filled many roles at Godfrey United Methodist Church, participated in the U of I Home Extension Program and was a member of Delta Kappa Gamma. She loved to travel and relished the summer conference trips throughout the country with her daughter Lexa, sponsored by Graphic Communication Education Association. Ardythe's thoughtfulness, warm elegance and gentle strength endeared her to everyone she met.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Jim and Pearl Machesney; husband of nearly 70 years, E. Dean Browning; sister, Carol Bonyng; brother-in-law Blaine Bonyng; sister-in-law Ruth Browning and brother-in-law Del Browning.

Those who remain to cherish her memory include her daughter, Lexa Browning-Needham and her husband, James E. Needham of Alton; grandchildren Rachael (Cameron) Williams of Huntsville, Alabama; James A. (Shannon Ryckman) Needham of House Springs, Missouri and Jonathan (Kara) Needham of St. Peters, Missouri; great-grandchildren Kate, Cam and

Jack Williams, Hank, Teddy, Ira, and Dean Needham; niece Susie Browning and nephew Don Browning.

The family wishes to thank Ardythe's many professional and compassionate caregivers for their excellent and life sustaining care that enabled her to remain in her home, including the staff from Unity Hospice. Our deepest appreciation, gratitude and thanks to Bridgett Morris for her years of dedication to Ardythe and our family.

Visitation will be from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., Sunday, October 12, 2025 at Gent Funeral Home in Alton. Graveside rites will be accorded by Rev. Dan Wright on Tuesday, October 14, 2025 at noon at the Fairview Cemetery in Annawan, IL with a celebratory lunch at the church immediately following. Memorial donations may be made to Fairview United Methodist Church or the Illinois Retired Teachers Association. . Online guestbook information may be found at [www.gentfuneralhome.com](http://www.gentfuneralhome.com).

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT **12**. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Gent Funeral Home  
2409 State Street  
Alton, IL

## Graveside

OCT **14**. 12:00 PM.

Church Immediately Following

# Tribute Wall

JR

“ Dean and Ardythe were great friends of mine. My condolences to the Browning family. John Barry Ritter

John Barry Ritter - October 12, 2025 at 03:01 PM

PC

“ Lexa and Jim, Tom and I want to extend our condolences to you both. Hugs to both of you. Peace be with you.

pamela carr - October 10, 2025 at 09:31 PM

RE

“ Ardythe was a wonderful lady. I learned so much from her as a new Food Director at Bethalto School District. She knew all the rules and regulations of the School Food programs. Ardythe rode with us to several Illinois School Food Conferences.

Rexie - October 10, 2025 at 04:07 PM

BS

“ I was a neighbor to Mrs. Browning, as a child and young adult. I remember going down to see their dog Cindy, they would give me a treat to give to Cindy. She was very kind to me and I will always remember those days.

Bill Spooner - October 10, 2025 at 10:15 AM

CF

“ Such a beautiful person and will be missed by many. Lexa, Steve and I are sending you our heartfelt condolences.

Cathy Forbes - October 09, 2025 at 02:57 PM