Sossoman
Funeral Home & Crematory Center
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Wanda Szak

May 1, 1929 - Jan. 20, 2026

Wanda Szak was born in 1929 to parents who emigrated from Poland. Wanda grew up in Chicago with her siblings Florence, Chester, Joseph, Patricia, and Genevieve. She married Fred Szak, and together Wanda and Fred embarked on a life-long partnership.

Wanda found her greatest joy in her children: Dona, Caroline, Peter, Mary, Kristin, and Suzanne. Wanda and Fred raised the children in Villa Park, Oak Brook, and Naperville, Illinois.

With six children Wanda did a fair amount of chauffeuring and could be found driving the white station wagon (her favorite car) to family swim at the Oak Brook Bath and Tennis Club or the local Guido's market. When the children had horses, Wanda learned to drive the red Ford pick-up truck and pull the horse trailer to various horse shows and events. She was a room mother at her children's school and was active in their Pony Club growing up.

Wanda was a great cook and baker. With its dog-eared pages, her Joy of Cooking book was her bible in the kitchen. She could seemingly whip up anything, including loaves of homemade bread (the smell was heavenly), chicken noodle soup, lasagna, lemon meringue and apple pies, and a kid favorite, her famous jello cake. Her creativity did not end in the kitchen as she was a seamstress too, sewing clothes for

her young children. While the family had numerous pets growing up, her favorite was a Siamese cat named Poppy. Wanda loved watching Masterpiece Theater Sunday nights on PBS and Sixty Minutes as well. Wanda loved a good mystery, and Agatha Christie was one of her favorite authors. Wanda shared her love of reading with her children, reading them bedtime stories when they were young, taking them to the library, and keeping a selection of good books on hand for all to enjoy.

When Fred and Wanda became empty-nesters, they decided to leave Chicagoland for a warmer climate. They traveled through Washington State and New Mexico before landing in the Asheville area. Here they made their home in Big Sandy Mush on 35 acres of rolling hills with cows and Fudge the pony. Wanda enjoyed life in the country where she could garden and grow both flowers and vegetables. Wanda was most in her element when she was hosting her children and grandchildren at the farm. Spending time with her grandchildren gave her great joy as she loved watching their silly antics and hearing of their exploits and accomplishments. Family reunions at Lake Lure and Cataloochee Ranch were a highlight where she was surrounded by her family all in one place.

When the upkeep became too much, Wanda and Fred moved to Morganton, NC. Wanda especially loved the Burke County Library in Morganton, where she could be found borrowing mystery books and sharing a kind word with the librarians.

Throughout her life Wanda was a faithful churchgoer. As she advanced in years she often proclaimed in Polish, “starosc nie radosc” - old age is no fun. Yet she continued to enjoy life in her Morganton home with her husband. Wanda passed away in her home with Fred and her eldest daughter by her side. Her family is grateful to the Amorem hospice organization for supporting Wanda during her final weeks.

While Wanda did many things over her 96 years, her kind and nurturing nature will be missed most.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

Dear Fred and the Szak family, We loved Wanda as a good friend and wonderful neighbor! We will miss her dearly. We enjoyed so many pleasent experiences with her, Fred and their children/families. Our deepest sympathy go out to the whole Szak family. We hope that Fred and family members will come by and visit their old farm in Sandy Mush and share the stories of her loving, kind and thoughtful character. Bob and Carol Fay

—Bob and Carol Fay

I just learned this morning about Wanda's passing. My deepest sympathy to her family. A genuinely bright light has left us.

—Joan Roach

Dear Uncle Fred and Dona, Caroline, Peter, Mary, Kristin, Suzanne - Aunt Pat told me about Wanda’s passing - I am so very sorry for your loss. I know we haven’t been in contact with each other in a very long time, but in reading Wanda’s obituary, I had to smile remembering the get togethers we had in Oak Brook and at Nana & Papa’s in Oak Lawn. I also remember Wanda’s kindness and generosity and easy going nature… please know my thoughts and prayers are with you all.

—Sheilah (Smok) Pearsall

I am sorry very sorry for your loss. May Fred and the children be comforted knowing they will be reunited whith Wanda one day. Wanda was a wonderful

mother in law. May God bless the entire Szak family

—Matthew Guilfoyle

Dear Mom, I love you and miss you.

—Caroline Erickson