

Westbrook

Featured Resident



Margaret McKenzie

Margaret was born in Norris City, IL. She was the youngest of six children born to S.R. and Zoa Henson (though two of the boys died at birth). She grew up on a farm outside of town. Her chores were carrying in the wood, feeding the chickens and gathering their eggs. She loved to play games, especially Bingo, and liked to play outside. She has fond memories of playing Pinochle as a family. Margaret attended a country school for eight years and then went on to graduate from Norris City High School.

After graduation, Margaret went to work at a dentist office in Norris City. She worked there for two years. She quit to get married to Kenneth McKenzie. Her family had known his family for years though not that well. One day Margaret was waiting in the car with her sister when Kenneth stopped by. They started talking and he asked her out. She said yes and they started dating. They didn't go dancing like many couples of the time because Kenneth didn't dance. Instead, they went to the movies. They married in February of 1951.

The couple settled into a house in Norris City. Kenneth worked as a truck driver in the oil fields and traveled quite a bit. Margaret went with him to Texas, West Virginia and Kentucky. She enjoyed getting to travel with him. In 1953, Ronnie was born and Margaret stopped traveling and moved a short distance away to Carmi, IL. Cindy was born in 1957. Shortly thereafter, Kenneth quit working in the oil fields. He worked as a custodian and a mail carrier.

Margaret stayed at home and took care of the children. She worked as a volunteer in their schools and was a Den Mother for Ronnie's Boy Scout troop. As a family, they were actively involved in the Methodist church.

In April of 1970, Kenneth passed away due to a brain tumor. Ronnie was 17 and Cindy was 13. They tried to continue cleaning the building where Kenneth was the custodian, but it was too much for them. Even though she hadn't liked school as a child, Margaret chose to back to school while she continued to raise her two teenage children. She attended a two year program in Harrisburg, IL, to become an LPN. Upon graduation, she went to work for a nursing home in Carmi, IL.

Margaret used to love to read, go for walks, and fish. She still loves to play games, especially Rummikub. She's been on several bus tours with her best friend to places such as Washington, D.C. during cherry blossom season, to the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, TN, and to Branson. She also has made several trips to see her grandchildren over the years.

In 2009, Margaret broke her hip. Cindy stayed with her for a while and they decided it was time for her to move closer to Cindy. Cindy and her husband, Larry, live in Trimble and so Margaret moved to an apartment in nearby Smithville.

In December of 2014, Margaret moved to Westbrook. It had been getting harder for her to care for herself and the apartment and she was lonely. She enjoys the activities and loves the food here at Westbrook. She enjoys not having to cook or clean.

Margaret is proud of her family. It wasn't easy. "Her life was difficult but she's a survivor," says Cindy of her mom. "She was and is a devoted mom and grandma." Margaret has her son, daughter and son-in-law, three grandsons, one granddaughter and five great grandchildren (one boy and four girls). The great grandchildren all belong to Ronnie's side. However in January of 2016, Cindy's son is getting married. So there is hope for more great grandchildren.

The entire staff at Westbrook Care Center are very friendly each time I stop in they are cooperative with anything I needed. - James R

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