



## Mary Bastianello Willis

June 15, 1931 - February 19, 2020

Mary Bastianello Willis (1931-2020) passed away on February 19, 2020, at St. Joseph's Carpenter House in Lafayette, LA. Mary was born and raised in Mexico City until she and her family moved to Trinidad during her teen years, and later, to Brownsville, TX. In 1951, Mary met and married the man who would become her husband of 63 years, Charles Willis. In 1952, Mary gave birth to their first son, Charles Raymond ("Chuck"). They moved to Kotzebue, Alaska to work for the US Weather Bureau until 1954. They returned to Brownsville and stayed for three years while Charles worked for Amoco and Mary gave birth to David Owen ("Dave") in 1954 and Richard Allan ("Rick") in 1956. A job opportunity with BASF Wyandotte Chemical Co. then led Charles and Mary to Gonzales, LA, where Mary gave birth to their fourth son, Durand Robert ("Coosh") in 1961. In addition to raising her very active four boys, Mary taught kindergarten and later worked in local politics. In 1976, Mary became the first woman elected to the Gonzales City Council. She also served four years as Mayor pro tem. In 1986, Mary co-founded and ran Willis Country School, an early learning center and day-care, with Charles and daughters-in-law Frances and Leslie.

For over two decades at Willis Country School, she was "Maw Maw Mary" to thousands of Gonzales area kids in addition to her own grand- and great-grandkids. She was a model parent/grandparent/great-grandparent who loved us directly and openly, and showed up for everyone, even when she was

barely physically able. She loved people, she loved life, and she lived well. Some of her favorite activities included cooking and hosting dinners (to us, she was a chef and a true foodie), taking annual beach vacations with the whole extended family, road tripping with Charlie in their jumbo van, acing hard crossword puzzles, watching LSU Football, fishing and crabbing (especially in Grande Isle), helping in Coosh's restaurant Bayou Rouge in Tallahassee, and enjoying red wine. Mary is survived by her sisters Sue Salazar and Helen Watson, her son Chuck and his wife Frances, her son Richard and his wife Leslie, her son Coosh and his wife Margaret, her grandkids, great grandkids, nieces, and nephews. She is preceded in death by her husband Charles Willis, her parents Dolores and Raymond Bastianello, her sister Leslie Creekmore, and her son David Willis.

We would like to thank the administration, staff, and residents of The Blake at Lafayette for being a constant source of care, support, friendship, and fun during Mary's final years. She especially enjoyed the themed dinners, card games with friends, bingo nights, and field trips to local art and music events.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Mary Bastianello Willis.*



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March 05, 2020 at 06:35 AM



“ *Mary always had the biggest smile and warm hugs to give. Always enjoyed talking with her when she was in town. I'm so so so very sorry for your loss. Sending Mary's family and frequents all my be as strength durn the difficult time. Xoxo*



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**Sheila McGraw** - March 05, 2020 at 12:22 AM



“ *So sorry to hear that Ms Mary has passed away. She was a wonderful woman who so many of us in Ascension Parish trusted with our precious children. Keith and I traveled several miles out of the way so our children could go to Willis Country School. Ms Mary and Mr Charlie were the best!  
Keith and Colleen Gautreau*

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**Colleen Gautreau** - February 29, 2020 at 11:19 AM