



## Lillian Jane Benjamin

September 21, 1930 - November 12, 2016

1930-2016

Lillian Jane Benjamin, 86, of Belen, passed away quietly at her home late Saturday, Nov. 12, with her family by her side. Born in 1930 to Willis and Jane Sellers in Chicago, she was a child of the Great Depression, recalling being carried along the railroad tracks by her father to pick up fallen pieces of coal to warm their home. At the age of 3, she developed polio, affecting her ability to walk throughout her life. Her childhood was one of long hospital stays, experimental surgeries and painful stretching exercises. She attended Chicago's legendary Christopher School for Crippled Children, where students with special medical needs were provided physical therapy along with a good education. In 1950, she married her high school sweetheart, Bernie "Jack" McCraw, and they moved to Belen two years later. New Mexico was her adopted home and she adored it with complete abandon; her favorite journeys were always to explore its many amazing places, from Taos to Deming and on and on, especially if the trip involved a picnic. She loved her state's people, its cultures, its grand scenery and its weather. In Belen, she worked as a cook in a number of local restaurants, including Judy's, Barbara's and Kotch's cafes. In about 1970, she went to work in the proof department at the First National Bank of Belen, employing her skill for mathematics. She retired as the head of the department. After her husband Jack's death in 1973, she married Alvin Benjamin of Belen, who shared her love of traveling and camping. He passed away in 1991. Lillian was a brave and kind person who never met anyone she

didn't want to talk to and know. She believed in justice, sharing, equality, forgiveness and the goodness of all people. She loved reading, parades and fairs, museums, travel, dogs, cooking and holidays. If something was happening in Valencia County, she always wanted to be there, especially if the historical society was involved. She loved history, especially stories about the U.S. presidents. Her favorite trip included a visit to the U.S. Constitution Center and other historic sites in Philadelphia.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her two husbands and her sister, Margaret Riley. She is survived by her children, Sandra Battin and husband, B.W., and Gary McCraw and wife, Tina, all of Belen; her grandchildren and the loves of her life, William McCraw and wife, Andi, of Avondale, Ariz., and Rebecca Hardyman and husband, Joshua, of Los Chavez; her sister, Joyce Little of Gilroy, Calif.; and her extraordinary nephews and niece, who called her Auntie Pal. She is also survived by Tess, the gentle dog who "just happened to wander into the yard and found a forever home." She loved the nurses, techs and her fellow patients at the Fresenius Dialysis Center in Los Lunas as if they were family. She was on a dialysis for more than 10 years. Lillian was a member of the Valencia County Historical Society and St. Philip's Episcopal Church, where she had served as treasurer. She was previously a member of the Belen Art League. At Lillian's request, a scattering of the ashes with favorite readings will be held privately by her family. Please sign Lillian's online tribute at [romerofuneralhomenm.com](http://romerofuneralhomenm.com) Romero Funeral Home, 609 N. Main St. Belen, NM.

# Tribute Wall

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“ *Lillian was a great lady.* ”

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**Michael Brophy** - March 05, 2024 at 09:16 PM

DR

“ *Dicky And Suzanne Romero lit a candle in memory of Lillian Jane Benjamin* ”



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**Dicky and Suzanne Romero** - November 15, 2016 at 10:50 AM