



MARLENE SCHULTE KERDYK

DEC 20, 1932 - MAY 11, 2017



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When people think of individuals who are inextricably linked to the 92-year history of the City Beautiful, Coral Gables' founder, George Merrick, comes to the fore.

But the city's heart and its grace for the last 65 years was a woman who had the pluck to venture here — alone — from a small town in Minnesota to seek her higher education degree in the early 1950s.

What Marlene Schulte Kerdyk found, in addition, was the love of a man who, with their son and her brother-in-law, would serve the Gables longer than any family. She would, in turn, earn the love and respect of a community.

“If George Merrick is the most known man in our city's history, then Marlene Kerdyk is the most well-known woman in our city's history,” said Coral Gables Commissioner Frank Quesada.

Kerdyk, the attorney said, was “the backbone of all the Kerdyk men who were involved in shaping our city. At City Hall, we always called her the ‘First Lady of Coral Gables.’”

In fact, Kerdyk, who died Thursday at 84 after battling cancer, is the only individual in the city's history to receive a 65-year service pin for her contributions, which included teaching, serving numerous groups, and supporting her husband, son and brother-in-law as they gave six decades of service, collectively, on the commission.

“That pin is the only one in existence,” Quesada said. “Any time you spoke to her she was always glowing and talking about her children and grandchildren. That always seemed to be the most important thing to her. Whenever you'd see her, you'd get a smile on your face.”

Kerdyk was born Marlene Schulte on Dec. 29, 1932, in Mankato, Minnesota, to German immigrants. Her father had asked her where she would like to attend college. She replied:



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University of Minnesota. But he thought she ought to consider some place different from what she had known. She decided on the University of Miami and drove herself some 1,800 miles to the Gables.

“She knew nobody. That was a big thing then,” said her son William “Bill” Kerdyk Jr.

Daughter Kim Kerdyk has to chuckle. “She came from a small town in Minnesota, came to Miami, and had a Puerto Rican roommate, a roommate from California, and one from New Orleans. Here you are from a static mid-America where everyone had blond hair and blue eyes and you come down here. But she loved it and never thought of going home. ‘This is my home,’ she said.”

Marlene Kerdyk was “the most well-known woman in our city’s history,” said Commissioner Frank Quesada. Kerdyk was married to William Kerdyk who served on the city commission for 28 years. Their son William Jr. served another 20 and her brother-in-law Frank served for four years.

The Kerdyk family, meanwhile, had made the Gables home in 1940. During the city’s 15th anniversary celebration that year, a young William Kerdyk met Merrick — a pivotal moment that helped make the Kerdyk name synonymous with public service.

After she graduated from UM in 1957, she taught first grade at Sylvania Heights Elementary in Miami. Kerdyk Jr.’s mother-in-law introduced her to William Kerdyk. The couple wed that year and were married nearly 50 years, until the senior Kerdyk’s death in 2007 at 79 at the Gables home they shared.

William Kerdyk’s brother Frank was the first in the family to win a seat on the Gables commission and served from 1957 to 1961. Frank Kerdyk was the sole vote against building the first high-rise in Coral Gables — the 12-story David Williams condominium tower on Biltmore Way.

William “Bill” Kerdyk Sr. served on the city commission for 28 years, from 1967 to 1995. He, too, was a staunch supporter of Merrick’s vision for the city. Kerdyk Sr. was a key figure in a contentious development battle over the area east of Cocoplum Circle in the late 1960s and helped defeat a push to develop the land into high rises. His son, Bill Jr., succeeded his dad and served from 1995 until 2015 — 20 years, governing much like his father and uncle had.



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Coral Gables Commissioner William Kerdyk Sr., in front of City Hall in January 1995, spent 28 years serving the city and retired that year. He was married for nearly 50 years to his wife Marlene. He died in 2007.

“We’ve always been very conservative in as far as voting goes,” Kerdyk Jr. told the Herald in 2015. “It started with my uncle, followed by my dad and that’s how I voted my whole tenure.”

All along, there was Marlene Kerdyk, the steady, guiding, supportive presence who served the University of Miami Hurricane Club, the UM Women’s Guild, Coral Gables Woman’s Club, the original Museum of Science and, for more than 50 years, the Coral Gables Garden Club.

For years, mother and son shared a morning breakfast at Einstein Bros. Bagels on Miracle Mile.

In this April 2015 file photo, Coral Gables’ then-vice mayor Bill Kerdyk Jr. chatted with Coral Gables Community Foundation executive director Mary Snow at Einstein Bros. Bagels on Miracle Mile. For years, Kerdyk had breakfast with his mom, Marlene Kerdyk, at this favorite spot. “She offered sage advice...she was such a positive person,” he said.

Nick Swyter Miami Herald file

“My mom was quiet and unassuming but really the pillar and strength of our family. She always put everyone’s interest first. However, when she spoke, we intently listened,” Kerdyk Jr. said.

COMPASSION. HER CARING DEMEANOR. HER GRACIOUSNESS. SHE WAS A TRUE LADY.
Daughter Kim Kerdyk on her mother, Marlene.

Indeed, when the seemingly unthinkable was about to become a reality — a Coral Gables Commission without a Kerdyk seated — it was Marlene, an integral part of the success of her brother-in-law, husband and son’s political careers, who had the sage counsel.

“Before making his decision, he kept worrying that he was letting the people of Coral Gables down,” she told the Herald in 2015. “But I said ‘no.’ He decided that it was his time. I don’t know if there will be anyone that could match the love and passion my son and my husband had, but there are are many good candidates and generations change.”

But her commitment to family — and a love for sports — never wavered. Her children played intercollegiate sports and she was a constant on the tennis courts and golf courses with them. “We



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used to joke that the athletic gene definitely came from my mother's side of the family, which my Dad used to vehemently object to," joked Bill Jr.

On May 27, 2009, family, friends and members of the local government joined together for the dedication of a portion of Douglas Road, between Southwest Eighth and 22nd streets to former Coral Gables Commissioner William H. Kerdyk Sr. Pictured from left, his wife Marlene Kerdyk and their daughter Tracy with the street sign.

Daughter Tracy turned golf pro in 1988. Her mother traveled extensively with her on the LPGA tour for 10 years to places like Japan and throughout the U.S.

"My mom instilled in us to be independent, reach and attain any goal we wanted and along the way be kind to everyone," Tracy said. "This propelled me into reaching my goals as a golfer but at the same time having integrity along the way."

Kim, who competed in tennis, recalled her mother's encouragement.

"We were best friends," she said. "We would go to a big tournament and when we came back she'd have notes and signs always for us to make us feel important — and surely she did that for dad, too. She was always there to give that supporting smile and that supporting hug, whatever it took. She always wanted to make sure all her men and her girls, too, were to take the spotlight. She was there in a supporting role. All those details that you don't see is what she did to make us special."

In addition to her three children, Kerdyk is survived by grandchildren William "Trae" III, Lindsay and Leigh Kerdyk, and her brother Richard Schulte.

A gathering and prayer service will be held 6 p.m.-8 p.m. Thursday, May 18, at Van Orsdel Coral Gables Chapel, 4600 SW Eighth St. and a funeral Mass at 11 a.m. Friday, May 19, at Church of the Little Flower, 2711 Indian Mound Trail. Donations can be sent to the Coral Gables Foundation, 1825 Ponce de Leon Blvd., No. 447, Coral Gables, Fl. 33134.

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Events


MARLENE SCHULTE KERDYK

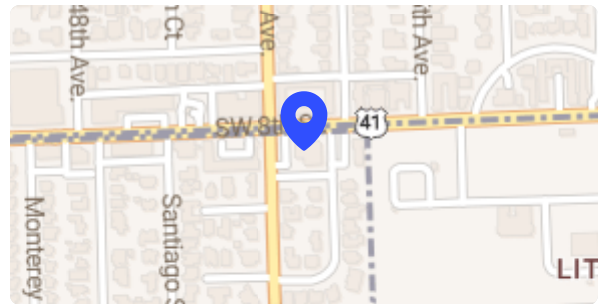
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Prayer Service


 **Thursday**, May 18, 2017


 7:00 PM ET

 **Van Orsdel Funeral & Cremation Services**
4600 SW 8th St, Coral Gables FL 33134

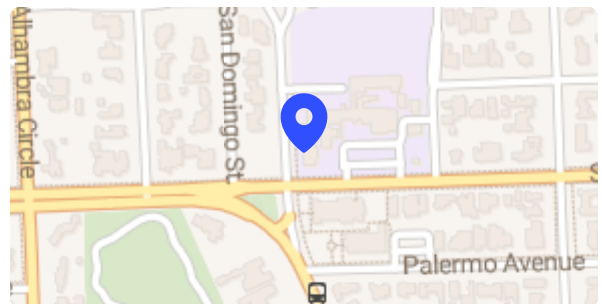


Mass of Christian Burial

 **Friday**, May 19, 2017

 11:00 AM ET

 **Church of the Little Flower**
2711 Indian Mound Trail, Coral Gables FL





Tribute Wall

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Richard, Harriet, Steve, Nick, Sidney, Scott, Adam sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the KERDYK family.

May 17 at 5:12 AM



Van Orsdel Family Funeral Chapels lit a candle in honor of MARLENE.

May 12 at 10:23 AM



Miami Herald shared an album called **New Album Name**.

May 12 at 10:15 AM





Miami Herald shared 5 photos to the **New Album Name** album.

May 12 at 10:15 AM







Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring MARLENE by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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