



Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis

October 27, 1940 - January 13, 2026

Ridgeway Township - Donnajean Irene "Jeanie" Lewis, 85 of Ridgeway Township passed away surrounded by loving family on January 13, 2026.

Jeanie was born on October 27, 1940, in Spring Green, Wisconsin, to Leslie and Irene (Ziebarth) Cowley. She joined her older brother Duane, and the family later grew to include two more brothers, Doug and Denny. They resided in the Arena and Ridgeway areas, where Jeanie developed lifelong friendships. The family eventually settled outside of Arena, where Jeanie graduated in 1958.

Jeanie met her one true love, Glenn Lewis, and they were married on October 4, 1958, in the Arena Congregational Church. They settled on Glenn's family farm in the community of Wakefield, in the township of Ridgeway. For many years, Jeanie was a farmer's wife and a full-time mother first to Marie, then Rodney, Ronald, and Lori, all within five years.

She was involved with the Homemakers, 4H, and spent time with neighbors, where she gained a friend who became a sister for life, Beverly Hoernke.

Always an avid writer, Jeanie submitted a story about her neighbors Bob and Margaret Disrud, cheesemakers at the Wakefield Cheese Factory, to the Dodgeville Chronicle. This marked the beginning of her freelance writing

career.

After a life-altering illness and recovery (1974–76), Jeanie moved full steam ahead. She trained as a professional photographer with Jerry First in Dodgeville, and soon after began working full-time at the Chronicle/Democrat Tribune, where she spent more than 30 years.

Wherever Jeanie took pictures, whether it was board meetings, sporting events, or any local happenings people recognized her by her height, bright red hair, and outgoing personality. People loved her stories. She wrote on a personal level about local people, always leaving an impression. Her feel-good, heartfelt stories were enjoyed by many.

Her passion for community extended far beyond journalism. Jeanie believed deeply in her local communities and the Iowa County area. She served in numerous organizations and committees, including the Wisconsin Newspaper Association, Wisconsin Historical Society, Local, State, and Country veteran organizations, the Iowa County Fair Committee, Hyde Historical Territory, The Simpson Church, and many others.

She also founded her own groups, beginning with The Iowa County Farmwives (later Farm Women), recognizing the importance of women on the farm and the roles they played. She wrote her first cookbook by compiling recipes from the participants of the first Farmwives Banquet.

“Wings of a Dove” was created after Jeanie saw how music comforted her mother in the nursing home. With the help of Lyle Foley and other musicians, she brought live music shows to the public. Free recordings and videos were shared with nursing homes and anyone who wanted them, bringing joy to many.

Jeanie became editor of the Mineral Point Democrat Tribune in the early '90s. She joined the Mineral Point Kiwanis Club and became part of the Mineral Point community.

One of her proudest accomplishments was founding the "Million Dollar Club" at the Hodan Center. After seeing the challenges and accomplishments of her nephew Ryan. She understood the positive impact organizations like the Hodan Center had. She re-released her cookbook, included wholehearted short stories, and donated one dollar from each book to her cause. She would say it's "not millionaire money, but a million \$1-dollar donations" She served on the Hodan Center Committee for several years, including as president.

Jeanie authored several books and short stories. She wrote stories of Ridgeway with her friend Melva Phillips. Her final book after retiring, "The Ridgeway Ghost," whom she had written about her entire career. Her stories often became a source of inspiration for other writers.

Spending time with family and friends was important to her. She enjoyed traveling and would travel anywhere. Especially, to visit with family. She cherished every "get together" and was a driving force in planning family reunions. She adored her grandchildren and spent as much time as possible with them. Later in life, Jeanie met her half-brother and his family, a discovery that brought her great happiness. She looked forward to Ken and his family's next visit in July.

She remained passionate about writing books, random thoughts, short stories, interviews, and cards. She loved planting flowers and making plans for her father's family homestead in Rio, Wisconsin. She was always available to support any cause or any family member or friend who needed her.

Much like her, we could continue writing, but there are just not enough pages to describe Jeanie. Words cannot express how much she meant to her family, friends and community. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

She is survived by her husband of 67 years, Glenn; their children Marie, Rodney (Cathy), Ronald, and Lori (OJ); and grandchildren Kimberly (Mark) Gratz, Jesse (Danielle) Cleary, Cole (Caitlyn) Lewis, Courtney (Jasper) Duberry, Vince Lewis, Augie Herr, Joy Peterson (Marcus), Megan McWilliams (Adam), and Ben (Megan) McWilliams.

Her great-grandchildren Boone (Jesse and Danielle), Madelyn and Brayden (Ben and Megan), Lennon and Luca (Megan and Adam), Olivia and Lincoln (Cole and Caitlyn), and Jettson (Courtney and Jasper).

She is also survived by her brothers Ken (Concetta) Cowley, Doug (Patricia) Cowley, and Dennis (Sandra) Cowley; sisters-in-law Gail Lewis and Joanne Cowley; and her lifelong friend, "sister" Bev Hoernke.

Jeanie leaves behind many nieces and nephews, a large family who will miss her dearly, and countless friends who will never forget her.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Leslie and Irene Cowley; brother Duane Cowley; in-laws LaVere and Ella Lewis; brother-in-law Donald Lewis; and sister-in-law Carol Cowley.

A Memorial Service will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 24, 2026 at the GORGEN-McGINLEY & AYERS FUNERAL HOME in Dodgeville. Visitation will be held from 9:00 a.m. until time of service on Saturday, January 24, 2026 at the funeral home.

A luncheon will follow at 12:15 pm at United Methodist Church in Dodgeville.

Our family would like to thank Ridgeway First Response, Dodgeville EMS, UW Med Flight and her care teams at Upland Hills Health and UW Madison Hospital for their excellent care and compassion.

In lieu of flowers, contributions to the Hodan Center Million Dollar Club would be appreciated

Cemetery Details

Eastside Ebenezer Cemetery

County Road H
Ridgeway, WI 53582

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 24. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Gorgen-McGinley & Ayers Funeral Home
400 East Grace Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533
(608) 935-5222
gorgenfh@mhtc.net

Memorial Service

JAN 24. 11:00 AM (CT)

Gorgen-McGinley & Ayers Funeral Home
400 East Grace Street
Dodgeville, WI 53533
(608) 935-5222
gorgenfh@mhtc.net

Tribute Wall

KF

“ I will always hold a special place in my heart for Jeannie. She was instrumental in spreading the "Wings of a Dove" which Lyle loved as well. His passion for music and her dedication to helping others allowed for many people to enjoy his music and the music of others. Jeannie recently mailed photos to me, and I am grateful for these.

With sympathy,

Kathy Foley (wife of Lyle Foley)

Kathy Foley - January 27 at 08:38 PM

JM

“ Jeanie was indeed a kind soul with a loving heart and a joyful, memorable laugh. I had the honor of working with her at the Dodgeville Chronicle and enjoyed our conversations. I met her as a teenager and visited their farm a few times when my sister Julie and I would come out and visit her daughter, Lori. Very nice, fond memories. My deepest sympathies and condolences go out to her family and friends. Jackie Ihus/Meudt

Jackie Meudt - January 23 at 12:39 PM

RM

“ Jeanie wore many hats and wore them well. A caring soul for sure. I had the pleasure of spending time with her on the MPOH committee for years when I was volunteer secretary with the group as well as other causes. She was a joy to be with. My sympathy in your loss of this lovely lady. Rosalie May

Rosalie May - January 23 at 09:13 AM

TR

“ Troy purchased the *Divine Peace Bouquet* for the family of *Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis*.



Troy - January 22 at 08:15 PM

TR

“ Troy planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of *Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis*.

Troy - January 22 at 08:15 PM

KP

“ *Krissy and Paula Price* purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of *Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis*.



Krissy and Paula Price - January 22 at 08:49 AM

TH

“ *The Family of Pat Hanson* purchased the *Medium Dish Garden* for the family of *Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis*.



The Family of Pat Hanson - January 19 at 06:28 PM

FF

“ Fehr Graham Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis.



Fehr Graham Family - January 19 at 10:32 AM

WR

“ With Love, Annie McKinley- Russell purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis.



With Love, Annie McKinley- Russell - January 17 at 04:43 AM

WR

“ With Love, Annie McKinley- Russell planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Donnajean I. "Jeanie" Lewis.

With Love, Annie McKinley- Russell - January 17 at 04:43 AM

TS

“ Jeanie was such a kind soul. Her support of Hodan Center was so special and her love for the people served there was unforgettable. She formed a Million Dollar Club to help the center...as she said "not millionaire money but a million \$1 donations". What generous thoughts! Rest peacefully good friend.

Tom and Trici Schraeder - January 16 at 10:28 AM