



## Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke

March 2, 1924 - February 29, 2020

Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke, 95, of Petersburg, Illinois passed away on Saturday, February 29, 2020.

She was born on March 2, 1924, in Ashland, Illinois, to Dr. Walter Benjamin and Mildred Jones Benjamin. She married Raymond Wankel on June 9, 1946, in Ashland, Illinois. In 2006, she married Norman E. Fricke of Petersburg, Illinois.

Ruthelma is survived by her two children, Marilyn Wankel (Tim) of Blandinsville, Illinois and Mark Wankel (Anita) of Pleasant Plains, Illinois. In addition to her children, she is survived by five grandchildren, Josh Taylor of Perkins, Oklahoma, Megan Taylor-Krueger of Minnetonka, Minneapolis, Les Wankel of Petersburg, Illinois, Tim Wankel of Tallula, Illinois and Kyle Wankel, of Petersburg. Eight great grandchildren, Emma and Colton Wankel, Maggie Wankel, Hayes and Auggie Wankel, Sam Taylor and Max, Will, and Camden Krueger. Three step-children, Mike (Jeanne) Fricke, Jeff (Karen Fricke) and Kathy (Ron) Ruppel, all of Petersburg, Illinois plus their seven grandchildren.

Her husband Raymond Wankel, her parents, and her three brothers preceded her death.

Ruthelma was a teacher in the PORTA School District for 38 years and an

instructor for Lincoln Land College. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Illinois State Normal University and her Master's Degree from the University of Illinois at Springfield. She received the Golden Apple Award, Those Who Excell Award from the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois State Alumni Association 2005 Alumni Queen, inducted into the PORTA Hall of Fame as a charter member in 2011, and most recently in 2018 was the Petersburg Citizen of the Year.

She served as a volunteer, officer, or President of many school, community, and church activities, as well as a volunteer at New Salem State Park.

She was a member of the Tallula Christian Church, where she served as Chairman of the Board, as well as an elder. In addition to church activities, she served in leadership roles for the Tallula Women's Club, Petersburg Women's Club, Shambole Ladies' Golf Association, Menard County Fair, Menard County University Women, Delta Kappa Gamma, New Salem Questers, and Half-Century Club of Illinois State University. She was a member of the Illinois Education Association, the National Education Association, Illinois English Teachers' Association, Land of Lincoln and Illinois Retired Teachers' Associations, and National Council of Teachers' of English.

Funeral Services will be held at the Tallula Christian Church at 2 pm on Saturday, March 7, 2020, with Pastor Jeffrey Gross officiating. Burial will immediately follow the service at Greenwood Cemetery in Tallula. The family will meet friends at 5 pm for a Celebration of Life at Wankel's In Petersburg following the services at 18239 Kelly Rd. Petersburg, IL 62675.

Memorial Contributions can be made to the Menard County Fair Association and to the Petersburg Rural Fire district.

# Previous Events

## Funeral

MAR 7. 2:00 PM (CT)

Tallula Christian Church  
311 N. Yates  
Tallula, IL 62688  
(217) 634-4431

## Celebration of Life

MAR 7. 5:00 PM (CT)

Wankel's  
18239 Kelly St.  
Petersburg, IL 62675

## Burial

MAR 7 (CT)

Greenwood Cemetery - Tallula  
Tallula, IL

# Tribute Wall



“ *Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke*

October 12, 2022 at 03:07 PM



“ *Mrs. Wankel was truly an inspiration for me as an English teacher. She showed that you could have compassion and high standards for children, and that is not a lesson just anyone can teach. I am so grateful to have had her both for English II and IV. A cherry on top: I even got to teach in her old classroom for two years!*

**Laurelyn Roberts** - March 10, 2020 at 06:26 PM



“ *Janalyn & Marcus Miller lit a candle in memory of Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke*



**Janalyn & Marcus Miller** - March 07, 2020 at 04:10 PM

MM

“ *Norm, Mark & Families:*

*We send our sincere condolences on the passing of a great lady. May you find comfort in knowing that all of you are in our thoughts and prayers. God Bless all of you.*



*Bob and Mary Jo Morlee*

---

**Mary Jo Morlee** - March 06, 2020 at 08:17 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke.*



---

March 06, 2020 at 04:53 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke.*



---

March 06, 2020 at 02:11 PM

MC

“ *Sorry for your loss, Ruthelma was a great person as well as caring teacher, she will be missed. Our prayers are with you. Marshall & Roxy Collins*

---

**Marshall M. Collins** - March 04, 2020 at 05:15 PM

LC

“ Dear Wankel and Fricke Families,

*We're praying for peace for all of you while you celebrate Ruthelma's wonderful life.*

*My childhood memories are full of wonderful times with the Wankel family. Most birthdays and celebrations included the Wankel family, Bud, Ruthelma, Mark and Marilyn, as well as Aunt Rosella, of course. I remember card games at the kitchen table, freezing corn together, and riding dirt bikes on their farm.*

*The fall season always included the most amazing bonfires out in the timber, with weiner and marshmallow roasting, hay rides and fun!*

*Summers would sometimes find us all at Canadian Haven, fishing for walleye. We'd also always plan a full evening with them at the Menard County fair for the tractor pull.*

*Every Christmas, our home was filled with the fragrance of a beautiful, ginormous pine tree that Bud Wankel would deliver from the woods.*

*The Uhland kids' childhoods were filled with JOY because of the love of this family and this wonderful woman. Heaven is enjoying her presence, I am sure!*

*Much love to all of you!  
Lynn (Uhland) and Irv Christy*

---

**Lynn Uhland Christy** - March 04, 2020 at 05:07 PM

PB

“ All I can say is, “What a lovely LADY!”

---

**pam bultmann** - March 04, 2020 at 04:50 PM



“ *Serene Reflections Bouquet was purchased for the family of Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke.*



---

March 04, 2020 at 11:33 AM



“ *Mrs. Wankel-Fricke was one of my very favorite teachers. Throughout my career when I had to write something, I would always ask myself if Mrs. Wankel would approve. She was excited about her subject and helped me to be excited about literature and writing. She was well respected and will be missed by all of us that had the privilege of being one of her students. Sincere sympathy to the Wankel's and Fricke's. Jackie Horn*

---

**Jackie & Gene Horn** - March 03, 2020 at 05:51 PM



“ *Heaven has acquired a very special angel with the arrival of Mrs. Wankel! She was one of the most educated and compassionate teachers I've been blessed to know. Not only did she master her knowledge of the subject matter, she had such a passion for it that she could easily impart that wisdom and exuberance to her students. I feel grateful to have been one of them! She truly was an inspiration! May the family be comforted knowing just what a saint she was and how many lives she touched. Rest well, Mrs. Wankel!*

---

**Janet Jackson** - March 03, 2020 at 04:38 PM

KS

“ Karen and Harold Steinkruger purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke.



---

**Karen and Harold Steinkruger** - March 03, 2020 at 03:49 PM

MM

“ My husband praised Mrs. Wankel- Fricke for teaching him to read. She would bring her late husband's magazines to class for the boys to share. He never forgot the kindness in her heart for students.

Later, when I got to know her, I realized why everyone loved her!  
Yes, she will be missed.

Prayers to Norman and the rest of the Wankel-Fricke Families.

*Paul & Marilyn Montgomery*



---

**Marilyn Montgomery** - March 03, 2020 at 02:43 PM



“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Ruthelma Benjamin Wankel-Fricke.



---

March 03, 2020 at 01:54 PM



Mark  
Hettinger

“ *She was a brilliant lady and educator. She made a huge difference in my education, and therefore in my career and in my life. She gave gifts of knowledge and understanding that keep on giving. My hat's off to her. I look forward to seeing her again and thanking her in person.*

*Mark Hettinger*

---

**Mark Hettinger** - March 03, 2020 at 01:15 PM



EB

“ *It was due to her English and Creative Writing classes that I was able to proficiency out of my first year of English in college. She never accepted anything less than your best and thereby made you realize what you were capable of. She also deserves credit for my being a part of the proofing team at my last job. Thank you for everything you did for me and all your students, Mrs. Wankel. Rest easy.*

---

**Ed Blair** - March 03, 2020 at 10:01 AM

JM

“ My mom was an English teacher for many years, but Mrs. Wankel taught me how to write. My freshman year of college, all the football players had to take a writing seminar to ensure they would be able to succeed in their classes. After writing my essay, the professor called me to his office the next day and asked “Who taught you how to write like that?” I spoke of Mrs. Wankel and how she taught me to eliminate passive voice. I explained how she taught me to use proper grammar and punctuation. He was so impressed, he wanted her number and he called her. He tried to convince me to be an English major for the next two years. I have so much confidence in my writing skills to this day, and I owe it all to her. She was such a good teacher. My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and I am sorry for your loss; but you should be very proud of the impact she made on so many lives.

---

**Jimmy Mies** - March 03, 2020 at 01:12 AM

DR

“ She was a great teacher, and I was so excited when I saw her at church and she remembered me. Such a beautiful lady, inside and out. She will be missed. My sincere condolences to the Fricke/Wankel families.

---

**Debbie Ruppel** - March 02, 2020 at 11:32 PM



“ Mrs. Wankel leaves behind such a beautiful legacy of touching so many of us during our high school years. She and her cohort, Mrs. Davis, inspired me to be my best. They kind of saved me. I got to return a small save back to Mrs. Wankel at the Fairhills grocery store. She was checking out in front of me and she only had a "counter check" which they would not accept. She was a bit embarrassed and allowed me to pay for her groceries. Gave me a counter check to reimburse me. It was good. My sincere condolences to her family. Joyce Stewart

---

**Jo Stewart** - March 02, 2020 at 11:01 PM

KK

“ Marilyn, Josh, Megan, and families: my deepest sympathy at the loss of such a great lady you were lucky to call mom and grandma. Love, Kim Ellen Genseal Kirchner

---

**Kim Ellen Genseal Kirchner** - March 02, 2020 at 10:18 PM

KO

“ Such an amazing woman who touched so many lives. God Bless you all

---

**Kathy Olesen** - March 02, 2020 at 09:53 PM

RR

“ What a lady! She was one of the first to welcome me at PORTA as part of the faculty. No matter when or where you saw her she always had time for a hello or a story. She had many great stories to tell. Condolences to the family and may you be blessed with all of your memories.

---

**Rita Rudd** - March 02, 2020 at 08:53 PM

MG

“ I was blessed to have many great teachers at PORTA High School. Ruthelma was one of the best. She was always challenging us to do our best in a positive way. Her English class prepared me very well for college and later my career. She was a true professional. May she rest in peace. Mark Gamage

---

**Mark Gamage** - March 02, 2020 at 08:30 PM

JS

“ Ruthelma has left a memorable imprint on the community & many of Petersburg students. She will be lovingly remembered by many. My sincerest condolences to all of her family at this time of deep sorrow. May God bless & keep her soul & bring peace & comfort to all of her family.

---

**June Simmons** - March 02, 2020 at 07:57 PM

KH

“ Mark and family,

*Please accept our sincere condolences for the loss of your mother and grandmother. Ruthelma was a wonderful teacher and a true servant to the community. She will be greatly missed by many.*

*Kenny and Bonnie Hills*

---

**Kenny and Bonnie Hills** - March 02, 2020 at 07:38 PM

DB

“ Menard County has lost another lovely lady . She will be missed by so many, I was fortunate to have known Ruthelma and spend time with her on a weekly basis. Heaven has received another Angel .

---

**Debbie Boeker.** - March 02, 2020 at 07:35 PM

PT

“ We send our sincere sympathy to everyone in the family. Mrs. Wankel was a beloved teacher. I can't even begin to share the wonderful memories and the impact she had on me because there are too many to count. My God comfort you all and give you peace in the coming difficult days.

Paula and Bob Throckmorton - March 02, 2020 at 07:01 PM

PM

I came to Petersburg about 26 years ago. Ruthelma welcomed me to Women's Club.. Lovely person! Everyone should have a Ruthelma in their lives. Prayers for the family.

Polly Myers - March 02, 2020 at 10:06 PM



I remember a few years back, Ruthelma was named Petersburg's First Citizen. I'm so happy she lived to receive that honor. She and Dr. Ott were my too favorite teachers at Porta. I learned to understand Shakespeare in her British Literature class, and learned how to write in her Creative Writing class. My deepest sympathy to her family.

Kathy Edens - March 03, 2020 at 08:01 PM

JH

“ My husband, Clint, and I have so many memories of Ruthelma. I taught with her for many years and we traveled some with Bud and Ruthelma. They were both “ salts of the earth” and the world was a much better place with them in it. After Bud's death she and Norm made a great couple too. I know her many students value what she taught them but all of us who knew her were also her students. She set an example by making use of every moment she was given. Rest In Peace, sweet lady.

Judy Hurdle - March 02, 2020 at 06:52 PM

JO

“ *One of my favorite teachers. Her Creative Writing/English classes are part of what guided me into the television business. Prayers to all. John Vogt, Porta Class of 1970.*

---

**John** - March 02, 2020 at 06:51 PM