



## **Marjorie M. (White) Morey**

### **March 6, 1927 — September 11, 2023**

Marjorie M. (White) Morey, 96, of Littleton, MA, passed away peacefully on Monday, September 11, 2023, at her home. Marjorie was born on March 6, 1927, in Groton, MA. She is the daughter of the late Frederick LeBlanc and Vera (Taylor) White of Amherst, Nova Scotia.

Determined, prideful, independent.

Marjorie was raised by a single mother before that term even existed. Her mother, Vera, widowed and pregnant at nineteen, crossed the border from Canada wearing a heavy coat to hide her bulging belly. A two-year-old in tow, the officials at the border said, “Too many LeBlancs today. Your name is now White.”

Once in the US, Vera and Marjorie lived with her parents and extended family. Marjorie grew up during the Great Depression, but her family never went hungry, as they lived on a large farm.

Vera's nuclear family moved often—probably a dozen times in as many years. Marjorie also stayed out of school for a year to take care of her mother who had contracted mononucleosis. Consequently, Marjorie graduated from Littleton High School when she was 20 years old, class of 1947.

Marjorie's home became the ultimate “maker's space,” where she kept busy her whole life with sewing, baking, music, art, and even cosmetology. Marjorie started designing and making her own clothes from a very early age. She began by repairing and altering clothes for herself and her family, and later used those skills to craft her outfits for her singing career. Even into her 90s, she cut and sewed her own clothing, from beautiful jackets, pants, and dresses!

Later, when she had kids of her own, she made all of their clothes, often creating matching mother-daughter outfits with the same fabric in the same style. When her youngest daughter, Bernadette, outgrew her matching dresses, she would get her older sister Ramona's hand-me-downs—and would complain that she had to wear the *same exact dresses* for five or six more years!

Style and appearance were very important to Marjorie. She insisted on always looking nice from head to toe, with hair carefully coiffed and makeup impeccably applied. This routine often kept the family waiting patiently in the car for several minutes on every outing, but she always looked great. Marjorie insisted on styling her own hair, too; she gave herself and her mother perms and coloring treatments at home, and neither her husband Jim nor their two daughters ever set foot inside a barber or hairdresser's shop, as Marjorie cut everyone's hair in the kitchen. She extended her skill with clippers and scissors to those outside her home as well, giving haircuts to friends and other family members—much to the chagrin of a one-time neighbor who was a barber downtown!

Marjorie was a good cook, and her baking skills were restaurant quality. She made ornately decorated cookies for her daughters to share with their schoolmates. She baked and decorated wedding cakes for her daughters, their friends, and every niece and nephew in the family. These confections often stood several feet high with multiple layers covered by intricately formed flowers. A high point in her baking career was the giant sheet cake for Littleton's celebration of the country's bicentennial. She had to use an oven at Nashoba Valley Technical High School to bake the cake. Her family also loved her apple and chocolate cream pies, which they were treated to at every Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Late every summer, she and her best friend Carolyn Webster would spend hours canning and pickling vegetables from the summer crops grown on Carolyn's dad's farm. The house reeked of vinegar, mustard, cucumbers, and other odd rotten tomatoes. The pungent aroma lasted for days. Jars of tomatoes, spaghetti sauce, pears, and a wide variety of pickles lined the shelves in her basement, providing the family with tasty food all winter and spring.

As a teen, she learned to play the guitar and to sing. She and Carolyn performed at various locations throughout New England. Her daughter recently discovered Marjorie's method for recording revenue from these performances; a typical note would read, "Received \$2 each at Boxborough Grange." As a solo act and as one half of the duo she and Carolyn (the other half) called The Sunset Serenaders, Marjorie played at the Lone Star Ranch and other venues.

At one of these shows, Marjorie met her future husband, James "Jim" Morey, also from Littleton. They dated for five years before she finally agreed to marry him on December 7, 1952. He gave her a beautiful diamond ring and a state-of-the-art solid-body electric guitar—although whether she received the ring or the guitar first will forever remain a mystery! Jim certainly knew the way to her heart, though; she played and loved that guitar for decades.

Marjorie often told the story of performing for the soldiers at Fort Devens during World War II. She never failed to choke up when she related the story of singing for the survivors of the Bataan Death March (1942). "The nurses prepared me by saying the men were in a bad way and that I should *not* show my shock or surprise at their appearance." She vividly remembered how one soldier requested her to sing *Danny Boy*, and for the rest of her life, this song brought to her eyes tears of grief and gratitude. Even as recently as a few months ago, her musically inclined grandsons Aaron and Jeremiah played this tune for her, and she sang along, remembering all the words, still tearing up, voice cracking, as old memories resurfaced.

Whenever anyone asked what she did for work, however, Marjorie always said, "I'm a professional artist." And she was. She had a great gift for drawing and sketching, but her favorite medium was oil paints. She completed her first painting of two hound dogs by a pond in 1949 when she was 22

years old. Soon after that, she began her career as a commercial artist. She learned to draft and paint signs from her father-in-law, David Anthony Morey, the founder of The Morey Art School in Boston. After perfecting the skill, Marjorie and Jim ran and operated The Morey Sign Shop out of their home in Littleton. During the '60s and '70s, almost every business in town was hanging at least one Morey-made sign at their establishment. She also painted all the classroom numbers and department names on doors in the original Littleton Middle School, and along with Jim, made silk-screened signs for local real estate agents throughout the region.

She also lettered trucks, large and small. For years, Parlee Lumber on Mill Road parked a trailer truck near Rte. 495 that sported her lettering. Although it was very visible from the highway, it did not qualify as a billboard, thus skirting the commonwealth's commercial sign regulations and allowing passersby (and drivers-by!) to appreciate her neat lettering for years.

At Kimball Farms in Westford, the sign with ice cream flavors and prices that Jim built and Marjorie painted in 1977 remains posted for visitors to carefully peruse as they choose what to order. The prices have changed since it was first hung, but many of Marjorie's original brush strokes remain. Her daughter, Bernadette, and boyfriend (later husband), Wayne have fond memories of delivering the signs—probably because they both received free Kimballs specials from the owner in exchange!

Marjorie may have been in the sign-painting business, but her true passion always lay in fine art.. She took many classes to learn different techniques— most notably with public television's Lynn Pitard, She was also a huge fan of Bob Ross and spent much of her later years watching his videos with her family. One of the largest paintings she ever tackled was a wall mural of The Old North Bridge. The project took weeks to complete. She painted so much, she often had to give her paintings to family and friends, completely free of charge, simply to make room in her porch studio! After her husband's sudden death in 1977, she learned to drive and started working at Veryfine New England Apple Products, a factory just down the street from her home. There, she deftly handled a massive switchboard, serving as the company's receptionist for ten years before her retirement at 62.

After retirement, she threw herself into her art and went on to paint hundreds of landscapes, portraits, and still lifes. She also made beautiful outfits for herself, her children, her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren..

Marjorie fiercely loved her family and was so proud of their many accomplishments. She is survived by her daughters, Ramona Gallant and her husband Alfred, and Bernadette Stockwell and her husband Wayne, as well as her six grandchildren and their families: Laura Gallant; Crystal Champagne, husband Ken, and their daughters; Jeremiah Gallant and wife Joanna; Rebecca Thresher, husband Ken, and their children; Aaron Stockwell Wisman and wife Lizzie;; and Shannon Stockwell.

Even at the end of her 96 years, Marjorie was proud of her independence, her appearance, the life she had lived, and most of all, her family.

**Family and friends are invited to gather and celebrate her life on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, from 9:30AM to 10:30AM at Badger Funeral Home, 347 King St. Littleton, MA 01460. Burial will immediately follow in Westlawn Cemetery, Littleton, MA.**

In place of flowers, the family asks that you please consider donating to Brookhaven Hospice in Marjorie Morey's name. [https://brookhavenhospice.com/make\\_a\\_donation.php](https://brookhavenhospice.com/make_a_donation.php)