

## **Nora 'Bonnie' E. Watters**

*Dec 7, 1939 – April 7, 2025*

*Written by Hooker Whitcomb Funeral Home, Barre*



Nora E. Watters, known as “Bonnie,” aged 85, of Chester passed away on Monday, April 7, 2025. Born on December 7, 1939, in Franklin, N.J., to Francis Patrick Edwards and Lorena Jennings Edwards.

She was a wife, mother, and doll maker, mover, shaker, connector and creator, offering her unique essence into all the lives she touched, whether it was her family, her community, or her many doll customers.

Bonnie grew up in the small mining town of Franklin, N.J., with her immediate family and, following her mother’s death, in the company of her Aunt Grace, who taught her to sew, with cousins, Doris and Marion, who were like sisters to her. She discovered her superpower: creativity, as a child – writing stories, performing in plays, and designing her own clothing. She graduated from Franklin High School in 1957 and attended Katharine Gibbs Secretarial School in Montclair.

Her grandmother drove her to New York City where she claimed a second superpower: taking care of people from behind a Selectric typewriter. While working as an executive assistant to the Secretary at Columbia University, she took classes in general studies and writing. She met her husband and love of her life, Lew Watters, in 1965 when the U.S.S. Duluth (LPD 6) was being commissioned in the Brooklyn Naval Yard. After a sweet friendship that involved picnics and bike rides in Central Park blossomed, she married Lew on June 22, 1968, in Sparta, N.J.

One of Bonnie’s favorite jobs was secretary to the president of the Woodstock Jesuit Seminary in Morningside Heights from 1968 until 1971 when her first child, Kate, was born. Bonnie and Lew then moved to Westfield, N.J. In 1974, they made a leap of faith and moved to

Chester, Vt., where they became stewards of an 1844 stone house in the historic Stone Village.

This house would be a beloved character in her life story for 50 years: the place where she raised her three girls, made and sold 15,000 dolls, fed people, hosted gatherings, tours, nurtured gardens and many pets. Bonnie and Lew were faithful and devoted members of St. Luke's Episcopal Church during all their years in Chester.

In 1968, Bonnie began sewing unique creations – calico stuffed animals, versions of Raggedy Ann, and in 1972, her first original doll, Eliza. Her doll-making was a hobby that flourished as a business when they moved to Vermont, where she opened a retail shop and sewing studio in 1979. The tagline, “Your eyes won’t believe our eyes,” referred to the unique motifs for eyes – letters, flowers, insects, even a Tiffany lampshade. Sewing at home allowed her to always be there for her growing children while employing other women seamstresses to assist with piecework. This began a long and storied creative journey that emphasized connections with customers.

Bonnie licensed her original designs to Butterick Patterns in the 1980s. The highlight of Bonnie’s Bundles was always the visitors who came to the shop on North Street in the Stone Village – often invited to enjoy tea and brownies.

Bonnie started working at the Student Conservation Association as an administrative assistant in 1989, when her daughters began to leave home for college. At SCA, she managed billing and coordinated finances for student volunteers to work in national parks and public lands.

In 2006, following her retirement, Bonnie and Lew embarked on a “Journey of a Lifetime,” and visited the parks, national forests and monuments and people with whom she spent hours over the phone in her job. For three months, they volunteered, camped and stayed with friends along the way and made many memories with their Arizona daughters.

In her retirement years, Bonnie wrote stories about her dolls, documenting her ideas in stacks of journals. In 2009, she began writing a blog on her doll website. She took up a long-held dream to cultivate flowers, a wildflower meadow, and vegetable garden in their wild backyard at the foot of Flamstead Mountain. She became inspired to write poetry after taking a workshop at Saint-Gaudens National Historic Park, adding poetry and gardening to her daily creative practice.

Bonnie self-published a book, *A Dozen Cats Plus One Who Sew*. She won the Poem Town Randolph poetry contest and honored many people, animals, and moments with her joy for words. Bonnie was fiercely devoted to her family, friends, doll customers, and community of Chester, staying connected with friends and neighbors after their move north to Chestnut Place in Berlin in 2023. She lit up the room with her sense of humor, always noticed someone's smile, and remembered everyone's name.

Her favorite sounds were purring and laughter, and she did not like wearing shoes. For trips to college, a special fabric store, or other long drives in New England, she always brought homemade salads for a picnic along the way in a cemetery or town park. She was always raising money and donating dolls to organizations that she and her family supported. She championed her daughters who she believed were "making waves."

Spring was her favorite season, and she will forever live on in the hearts of her loved ones in the spring flowers, "pushing up daisies," as she used to say.

Bonnie is preceded in death by her mother and father, stepmother, Florence Mae Hall Edwards (1972), brother, John Edwards (2012).

Survivors include husband Lew Watters, formerly of Chester and now of Berlin, daughters Kate and Kelly Watters of Rimrock, Ariz., and Kara Watters Lake of Brookfield, Vt.; sons-in-law Andy Lake and Mike Knapp, and six Lake grandchildren: William, Gurion, Samuel, Beatrice,

Shiloh and Isaac. She will be dearly missed by her family, friends, community and lifelong customers.

Those wishing to contribute a memorial may send a donation to **Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice** in Barre or to a fundraiser by **Wild Heart Farm** to help create a **Healing Garden in Honor of Mothers**. A celebration of her life will be on Saturday, July 20th at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Chester, VT.

Arrangements are by Hooker Whitcomb Funeral Home, 7 Academy St., Barre. **To read and sign her memorial guestbook, please [click here](#).**