



Judy Elaine Dutka

March 9, 1955 - June 15, 2026

Judy Elaine Dutka, 71, of Lone Rock, passed away peacefully on June 15, 2026, at William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin.

Obituary written by Judy.

I was born in Dubuque, Iowa. I had an older stepbrother, Michael, and a stepsister, Jane, from my mom's first marriage. Dad didn't want to stay around his family, so we moved to southern Wisconsin when I was two or three years old. Daddy was a dairy herdsman, and Mom did all the work of a farm wife. When I was in the third grade, Daddy bought his own farm in central Wisconsin. We had a big, beautiful house. We all worked hard, very hard. I remember Mom telling me, "Always wear your shoes when you go down to the barn." One day, I was walking up from the barn to the house. I was barefoot, and I stepped on a metal bottle cap. Well, Little Judy had to go to the hospital to get sutures. We didn't have that much, but we were happy.

Later, there was a bad drought, and things started going bad financially. Mom and Daddy bought a restaurant in La Valle, Wisconsin, and we moved there. My last two high school years were in a new school and a new town. I didn't do much in school; I'd come home from school and go to the restaurant right away. We always had fun on Saturday nights because people would come in after dances, and we'd be really busy.

After two years in the restaurant business, Dad had an accident while picking the rest of his corn. He was very safety conscious, but the guy he was working with wasn't and didn't have the shields on. After Daddy lost part of his hand he was disabled. His health declined from there, and so did my mom's, so they sold the restaurant but stayed in the area. Daddy was always good to people, no matter what. If there'd been a sign over our door, it would have said 'Always Welcome'. It was like that.

After high school, I worked in manufacturing for a couple of years. I kept thinking there was more to life than this small town, so I joined the Air Force. Daddy had been in the Army, and they supported my decision. It took a month to get my security clearance because my grandma, who'd come from Russia, had refused to let my dad into the house when Daddy came home in uniform. I tried to enlist in the Navy but didn't pass that exam. I passed the Air Force exam, though, so I enlisted on April 29, 1975. I'm considered a Vietnam-era vet even though I didn't go to Vietnam.

Basic training was at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. After more training in Mississippi, I was stationed at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, as a ward clerk in aircraft maintenance. I grew up fast in the Air Force and learned the meaning of teamwork. I served there for two years and stayed on six more years in the Air National Guard.

I returned to the manufacturing job in Richland Center after active duty, but that wasn't doing much for me, so I used the GI Bill for two years of college in nursing. I started as an LPN and eventually got my RN from Southwest Technical College. I'd always thought about nursing, but it was my military experience that gave me the courage to study it. I worked in nursing homes; for 10 years I had my own unit. After I got my RN, I started working at different care facility. I really liked how they took care of the patients, plus I got better

pay without the headaches of being a supervisor. I have built up a good rapport with everybody in our community, as I took care of many people's parents.

In 1978, I had my hand crushed in an accident while on an Air National Guard exercise, and I ended up having to quit work in 1997 due to pain issues. I loved my job, and it was hard to adjust to not working. I have a 100% service-related disability now; the DAV really helped me with that process. In 1991, my parents and brother got in a bad car accident and were hospitalized for three months in Madison. Dad is here in the VA, and Mom and Michael at UW Hospital. I went to part-time to take care of them. Our sister wouldn't come and help me, and that was the end of our relationship.

I took care of Mom, who died the next year of multiple problems. Before Mom died, my dad had been very active and a really good woodworker. He'd go to Iowa to get cedar logs and make chests, and I'd make handmade Christmas ornaments and embroidered things and stuff like that. We'd sell things at the craft shows. I'd do the organizing, and he'd talk to the people. After Mom died, he gave up. My brother Mikey and I agreed to do what we could to keep Daddy at home. He required a lot of care after many strokes, but we took care of him until just before his death.

Mikey was 10 years older than me, but he always looked out for me. When I was in grade school, he would walk me the six or eight blocks to and from school. Mikey never had a job, but he started driving a tractor when he was 15. He was always working with Daddy on different projects. Daddy would say, "C'mon Mikey, let's go!" and off they'd go. He was good at making things. I remember I told him once that I needed a box for something, and he made one for me.

When he was younger, Mikey lived in a group home for a couple years. I still remember when Mom and Daddy told me, "We're going to get Mikey and

bring him home.” He hates pizza to this day. That’s pretty much all they ate at the group home. I took care of Mikey for many years. He lived by me, and I would check on him pretty much every day. One day, I went to check on him and found he’d died a few hours before from a heart attack. He was a really good brother.

I’m really hoping to recover from this back surgery, to be able to move around with less pain. Being dependent on someone else to do things is just not me. I live on an acre of land Dad gave me. I have two dogs. One is a Chihuahua, Jimmy. The other is a Rat-Terrier/Chihuahua, Remington. They provide a lot of emotional support. I call them “my boys.” Good friends are staying with them and taking care of my home right now. They plan to stay for a while after I get home to help me recover.

The doctors and nurses know me. I’m independent and don’t let anybody get away with anything. I will speak up for myself. I like to be active. I love to go swimming. I have a lot of friends and try to be involved with my church and the American Legion Post, which I joined two years ago. It’s one of the most active chapters, and we do a lot of fundraisers. We raised \$30,000 for Badger Honor Flight. When I was working, I’d take cruises, and I’d like to take a cruise again to the Bahamas and just be out and about. I want to recover from this back surgery and get back to doing more than I have in the last few years.

Funeral Services are pending with the Clary Memorial Funeral Home in Richland Center.

Tribute Wall



“ *Sympathy to family, RIP Judy, I worked with Judy at PVHC, Judy was a very good nurse, her patients came first.* ”

Peggy Andrada - 26 minutes ago