



Elizabeth A. Wills

September 24, 1923 - August 28, 2019

Elizabeth A. Wills, 95, of Louisiana, MO passed away on Wednesday, August 28, 2019. She was born on September 24, 1923 in Cologne, Germany, to Wilhelm and Alice Lion Gombert.

She was preceded in death by her father, Wilhelm, a famous opera singer with the German State Opera in Berlin, and mother, Alice, a Swedish national and a concert pianist; her two older brothers, Hans and Dieter Gombert; her beloved husband, Otto and their daughter, Kathryn Elizabeth Wills Shepherd.

She is survived by her a niece Angie Coppi (Verne), great-nieces Samantha and Claire Coppi, nephew Dale Gombert (Lorri), niece Holly Gombert Young (Jim), and son-in-law, Tom Shepherd.

Elizabeth was a child actress, appearing first at age 3 in the opera "Madame Butterfly" and as an adult joined the Germany Repertory theater. More recently she was active in the Raintree Arts Council in Clarksville, MO.

Her early education was in a convent school in Belgium where everyone spoke French. She fled the school on foot, along with all students and nuns, as Belgium was being bombed by the Nazis. When she got home to Berlin, the family was also bombed nightly by the Allies. The worst part of the war for civilians was to sit helplessly in underground air raid shelters or the

basements of your home during increasing bombings. Life was difficult for both Elizabeth and her husband because both of their mothers were Jewish.

Elizabeth and Otto Willenbuecher were married in 1945 and were smuggled out of Berlin in 1946 by an American soldier. They lived in Sweden for about two years before coming to the United States in 1949. The best year of their life was in 1954 when they received their American citizenship and they changed their name to Wills. They were so grateful to this country for taking them in and for all their opportunities here. They always thought of themselves first as Americans.

Living and working in New York City, the couple learned two different English languages. Otto worked with Italians and picked up their colorful language while Elizabeth spoke like her Yiddish colleagues in the garment industry. The television was their best tutor.

Elizabeth's career in the states began as a cleaning woman, to foreign language secretary for Mr. Bloomingdale of the Bloomingdale's Department Store, to school teacher and finally, in 1964, to liaison secretary for the NATO forces with McDonnell Douglas Aircraft, translating all the technical conversations.

Elizabeth and Otto retired to their weekend farm in Curryville, MO in 1977 and immediately Elizabeth became the Sunday school Superintendent of the Presbyterian Church, President of Business and Professional Women, President of Pike County Homemakers Extension Clubs and more. Ten years later they moved to their home on Hwy D in Louisiana, MO.

Elizabeth was a guest speaker on many occasions on subjects such as the education system in her native Germany, what the American flag means to an immigrant and the horrors of WWII including the Holocaust.

At her request, her cremated remains will be buried at a later date next to those of her husband, Otto, in Buffalo Cemetery. Loved by many, she will be missed.

Tribute Wall



“ Elizabeth A. Wills

November 08, 2022 at 10:35 AM



“ Elizabeth A. Wills

November 08, 2022 at 08:46 AM



“ Elizabeth and Otto were guests at our Vandalia farm home several times and as always we enjoyed hearing about their heritage and experiences. I mistakenly served Otto chicken one time for lunch at my home and he vowed he would never eat chicken after having to consume it many times when he was in the military hunting down Russians. Over the years, they blessed us with their many homemade ornaments at Christmas time, and I lovingly remember their personalities and faith when I hang them on the Christmas tree. Dear Elizabeth, Alan and I were blessed to know you. Loralee Adam Columbia, MO

Loralee Adam - September 12, 2019 at 10:41 AM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Dale Gombert - September 05, 2019 at 12:02 AM

KA

“ You were always a joy to care for. Such delightful conversation and wit. You will be missed by many

kathleen - September 03, 2019 at 06:32 PM

LW

“ Elizabeth and Otto were rare and very special people that I was privileged to know. I loved their stories of their youth and early years together - the struggles they faced and overcame. I loved to hear what their US citizenship meant to them and how proud they were to fly the American flag at their home. I have always thought that I and our community were blessed when they decided to locate their home here. RIP dear angel Elizabeth as I know you are loving your joyous reunion with Otto, Kathryn, your parents and brothers. You brightened and enlightened our world and now the sky is a little brighter with your star shining down on us.



Lisa Watts - September 03, 2019 at 04:47 PM

CO

“ Cindy Osborne lit a candle in memory of Elizabeth A. Wills



Cindy Osborne - September 03, 2019 at 02:32 PM



“ I am very sorry to hear of dear Elizabeth's passing. She has had a hard last few years. She was a very dear soul. A great friend of my mother and myself. I doubt many of us realize how lucky we are living in America. She will be with Otto and her family in heaven now. I will forever think fondly of Germany and her raising there. Godspeed Elizabeth.



Billy Knock - September 03, 2019 at 08:53 AM

ST

“ Oh, I will miss Elizabeth so much. What a beautiful soul in a beautiful lady. Any time we saw each other, she would sit with me, and let me talk, but more importantly, LISTEN to her. What a fantastic woman. She will be missed.

Stacey - September 03, 2019 at 08:47 AM

LC

“ Elizabeth was quite a lady. She was definitely an awesome woman. I had the great pleasure of taking care of her over the past several years. I have several memories of Elizabeth and will treasure them all! RIH

Lorie Cleeton - September 02, 2019 at 04:03 PM

DC

“ I am sorry to hear of the death of Elizabeth Wills. She and her husband and I have shared many occasions together over the years, visiting in their home south of Louisiana, and at many times at the First Presbyterian Church, Louisiana for services and other activities.

She certainly was a special lady in many ways and will be missed by her friends.

D. Randall Cone

D. Randall Cone - September 02, 2019 at 12:03 PM

DC

Elizabeth was such a sweet soul. I used to love talking to her and hearing her sing Christmas songs in German and French. She will be missed

Dianne Collins - September 03, 2019 at 10:29 AM