



## Gina M. Carden

June 8, 1931 - June 10, 2022

GINA M. CARDEN, age 91 of Madison Heights for over 50 years, passed away June 10, 2022, in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. She was born June 8, 1931 in Detroit, Michigan to Angelo and Emma Digirolamo.

Taken from The Loop Resident Spotlight last fall: Gina Carden is a respectful, gracious individual who actively strives to extend understanding to others. Born in Northeast Detroit, Gina and her younger brother grew up in a family of Italian immigrants. From a strong Catholic faith to the tight-knit community of her neighborhood, Gina's life was steeped in heritage. Thirty to forty Italian immigrant families populated the area, and most Sundays would find them gathered: eating, drinking, and playing cards. Italian was her first language, Italian fare common in her home (gnocchi with olive oil and garlic is her favorite dish). Although her mother, Emma, was born in West Virginia, her family returned to Italy when she was two. Emma remained in the small mountain village of Pietralta, only accessible by mule, until she returned to the states with her sister in 1928. Her husband, Angelo, who grew up in a nearby village, came to America earlier. They were married in 1930. Gina learned many things from her parents: primarily faith, hard work, and independence. Gina's father worked for the Henry Ford Motor Company until he opened his own trucking business in 1941. Gina's mother worked alongside him, handling everything from dispatching trucks to service calls. "My mother was his equal partner, always," Gina said. "That was important to me. He never treated her as less or more."

Gina attended public school through seventh grade, then parochial school, graduating from St. Benedict Catholic High School in 1948. Gina lived on a block comprised of various immigrant families; "I felt it was a privilege to grow up that way," Gina said. "We may not agree with our neighbors, but to know what they believe and respect it speaks peace to the world, let alone your neighborhood and city." Gina reflected on the joys of her childhood: "Every house had several children, so you could open your door and have a dozen kids to play with," she recalled. Gina remembers hot summer days when the firemen would open hydrants and children could cool off together.

After high school, Gina earned a Business Certification from Detroit Business Institute. She met her husband, James, when he began working for her parent's company as a truck driver. Gina also worked in the family business since age 10. The couple had three children: James Jr., Curtis, and Angela. Over the years Gina gained employment in office positions, from Chrysler's Engineering and Export Divisions to the Shriners. When she was 50, Gina decided to continue her education. She attended Oakland Community College and earned two Associate Degrees, one in Mental Health and one in Applied Science. Gina worked as a Certified Medical Transcriptionist as well as an Accounts Receivable Clerk. She took special interest in helping those with alcohol addiction, and attended open AA meetings weekly for six years to learn more. Gina was able to apply this knowledge, coupled with what she learned in class, to her volunteer work. She also earned an Alcohol Substance Abuse Certification from the state of Michigan. What began as internships during college became much more: Gina served a Madison Heights Police Department Reserve Officer for 30 years as well as Hazel Park Probation Officer for 10 years while holding down her day job with the Oakland County Health Department in the Breast Cancer Screening Department as an office leader for 20 years. Gina decided to pursue further schooling at Florida Atlantic University, where she wintered for 25 years in Fort Lauderdale, studying Condominium Management and World Religion, among other topics. "It expanded my knowledge on the world's great religions," Gina said. This interest was originally stoked during her senior year of high school when she took a required class on the topic.

Another enlightening event in Gina's life was the journey she made to Italy with her parents, traveling both coasts from central Italy to Naples to Rome, as well as visiting her parent's hometowns. Other special travel occurred when her children were school-aged, and James Sr., a racing fan, inspired the family to begin annual trips to Daytona for NASCAR racing, which they enjoyed for many years.

Gina resided in Madison Heights for 62 years. She has six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Strong family relationships are important to Gina, who lived with her daughter, son-in-law, and their daughter prior to moving to Green Acres. Gratitude is also important to Gina. "We are the luckiest people in the world," she said. Adding that people should "feel grateful about what you've been given in life." She reflects: "The only thing we have, really, is the reputation we leave behind.

She will lie in state Tuesday, June 14, at 10:30 am until the time of Mass at 11:00 am at St. Mary Magdalen Church (northeast corner of John R. Road and Woodward Heights) in Hazel Park, Michigan.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her honor would be appreciated to Tunnel to Towers Foundation, Shriners Hospitals, Capuchin Soup Kitchen of Detroit, or the Isabella Community Soup Kitchen.

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# Previous Events

## Instate

JUN **14.** 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (est)

St. Mary Magdalen Church  
50 E. Annabelle  
Hazel Park, MI

## Funeral Mass

JUN **14.** 11:00 AM (est)

St. Mary Magdalen Church  
50 E. Annabelle  
Hazel Park, MI

# Tribute Wall

BC

“ *On behalf of the Capuchin brothers I offer my deepest sympathies on the passing of Gina. It is truly humbling to receive memorial donations in honor of her life. Please be assured of the brother's prayers for the entire Carden family during this great time of grief. May perpetual light shine upon Gina.*

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**Br Nick Blattner Ofm Capuchin** - June 13 at 01:51 PM