



Jessica Campbell Little Appel

August 29, 1933 - May 13, 2025

Jessica Campbell Little Appel, 91, peacefully passed away at the home of daughters and son in law Andrea and Jeff Smith and Stephanie Appel in Maryville, Tennessee on Tuesday, May 13, 2025. Born at Horton Memorial Hospital in Middletown, New York on August 29, 1933, she was the eldest child of Clarence and Mary Campbell Little, both natives of Vernon Township. Jessica spent nearly her entire life in the same square-mile patch of land between Lake Pochung and the Wallkill River in Vernon Township, first at her parents' dairy farm just south of the lake and later on land abutting Route 565 just north of the river. She experienced life on a dairy farm before the age of industrial milking and like many of her generation, understood the meaning of physical labor and hard work.

She graduated from Sussex High School in 1952 and went on to complete an Associate's Degree from Centenary Junior College in Hackettstown, New Jersey. After a few years of varying types of employment, she funded her own education at Paterson State Teacher's College, where she obtained both a BA and an MA in Education. She began her teaching career at the Lincoln School in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey in 1959. One highlight of this time was a New York Times article about her third grade class and their correspondence with students in Moscow, Russia. The story appeared in 1962, when the Cold War was in full force. Subsequently, Jessica taught in Wyckoff and briefly in Vernon Township before starting her own family in 1970. Jessica returned to teaching

in 1978 after her youngest daughter entered kindergarten. She taught at Sussex-Wantage Middle School first as a resource room teacher and later as a language arts and math teacher for grades six through eight. She retired in June 1994.

Jessica married Joseph Friedrich Appel at St. Monica's Catholic Church in Sussex, New Jersey on July 8, 1967. The two met as young children, when Joe's family purchased a tiny summer home down Pochung Road from the "upper" Little Farm in Vernon. The families kept in touch over the years, even after the summer home was sold. Their union was not a "storied romance," but rather a man who never forgot the tough and kindhearted farm girl of his childhood. Before human children, Jessica and Joe first practiced the art of nurturing with a litter of Dalmatian puppies. The intent was to sell the dogs, but since that proved hard on their heart strings, most of these animals remained as family pets. Animals were always a mainstay. She adored horses, dogs and cats. She also enjoyed feeding deer and wild birds, until the local bear population took notice and she had to "cease and desist."

Jessica and Joe built their home off of Route 565 almost opposite the house formerly occupied by her own grandparents, informally known as the "lower" Little Farm. Between 1970 and 1973, Jessica became a wonderful mom to three little girls. In her stay-at-home capacity and with Joe working weekdays in New York City, she became the chief manager of the family's vegetable farm and road-side stand. In the 1970s, in addition to fresh vegetables, Jessica also sold antiques, arts and crafts, and second-hand items. Slowly the couple transitioned to tree farm operations, which included the sale of firewood, Christmas trees and potted Japanese maples into the 1990s. Throughout these years, Jessica kept their little paradise moving and shaking with endless chore and task lists. Organization came easily to her and was a hallmark of both her classroom and family management. Jessica and Joe worked hard to put all three girls through college and were loving and

supportive parents.

In 2011, Hurricane Irene caused widespread damage in New Jersey. The little brook that ran under a part of their driveway became briefly a raging body of water, which damaged the tile under the driveway, as well as some smaller structures closer to the brook. With all of their children having moved out of state, recovering from this event took a physical and emotional toll on Joe and Jessica. Reluctantly, the couple left New Jersey. They sold their beloved home and moved to eastern Tennessee, where they could reside with and be cared for by their daughters Andrea and Stephanie and son-in-law Jeff Smith. Her last residence was "Turtle Creek Farm" east of Maryville, on land that much-resembled, but could never replace her beloved home in Vernon: many trees, a long driveway crossing a stream, beautiful garden beds and lots of "critters."

Jessica was predeceased by her husband Joseph F. Appel, parents Clarence and Mary Little; and her siblings Joseph F. Little and Mary Jane Little Mack. She is survived by close family: daughter Courtney Sadler (Jim) of Parker, Colorado; Andrea Smith (Jeff) and Stephanie Appel, both of Maryville, Tennessee; her niece Joy Little Allen (Bruce) of Crandon Lakes in Newton, New Jersey, and Joy's mother, Irene Little of Newton, New Jersey. She is also survived by four grandchildren: Matthew, Jacob, Sarah and Joseph Sadler of Parker, Colorado. Lastly, she leaves behind her numerous and much loved nieces and nephews from her husband's side of the family: Chuck Appel (Erica); Phil Appel (Eileen); Mark Appel; Paul Appel; Nick Appel (Terri); Jenny Merritts (Gerry); Katie Scandalios (Chris); Jim Dlugos (Melissa); Andrew Dlugos; and Peter Dlugos (Aimee).

A funeral Mass was held at Our Lady of Fatima in Maryville, Tennessee on Saturday, May 31st. A recorded version can be viewed at: www.ourladyoffatima.org/JAppel-Funeral-Mass Jessica's ashes will be interred at Deckertown-

Union Cemetery in Wantage, New Jersey on Saturday, August 9, 2025 at 11 am. . Suggested memorial donations in her name can be made to the Friends of Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge (www.friendsofwallkillriver.org), the Vernon Historical Society (www.vernonhistoricalsociety.com) or any animal rescue organization. Suggested act of service: Pray the rosary and pray for peace in the world. Online condolences may be offered to the family on www.pinkelfuneralhome.com.

Cemetery Details

Deckertown-Union Cemetery

Route 23 South
Sussex, NJ 07461

Previous Events

Graveside Inurnment Service

AUG 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Deckertown-Union Cemetery
Route 23 South
Sussex, NJ 07461

Tribute Wall

K(

“ Rest In Peace Mrs. Appel, you were my 8th grade teacher at Sussex-Wantage middle school, I always remember that you had a lovely smile and offered wonderful advice. Your family are in my thoughts and prayers.



Kelly Wronka (Conklin) - June 02, 2025 at 04:33 PM

SR

I am so sorry to hear of the loss of Mrs. Appel. She was a math teacher I had at Dussex Middle School. One of my favorite teachers. May she Rest In Peace.

Susan Rome - June 02, 2025 at 07:40 PM

TW

Sorry to learn of Jessica's passing. We knew both Jessica and Joe from St Monica's. I was also a high school friend of Mary Jayne. I remember going to the Little Farm visiting Mary Jayne. Prayers for you girls and family. Theresa and Michael Westdyke

THERESA westdyke - June 02, 2025 at 09:24 PM

RP

*Hi
Stephanie and Andrea*

*Actually just read the notice of you Mom's passing.
together with her husband and your father Joe it marks
the end of an Era in your family's history.*

*A history of which you are surely proud and now live out in your own
family today.*

*Your parents put their whole heart and soul in everything they did.
their marriage , their children their work and especially their Church -
St. Monica's -*

*Their faith and love and relationship to God permeated all they did and
you, their chilfren as well.*

*I have no doubt they now rest in the arms of God
and rejoice in The eternal kingdom of Heaven.*

*I again apologize for not being able to travel to Sussex for your fathers
funeral nothing would have given me greater joy but it simply was not
meant to be.*

*I see you have chosen to celebrate your mother's funeral Mass in
Tennessee.*

A great idea !

*Please accept my deepest sympathy ay your mothers' passing I will
remember her at Mass this Sunday at a parish in Boca Raton, Florida.*

May Jessica rest in Peace

*May the angels come to welcome her to the eternal Kingdom of
Heaven.*

Fr. Charles Perricone

rev. charles perricone - June 24, 2025 at 07:35 PM