



Ruth Velma (Lewis) Thibeault, 83, passed away suddenly with family and friends by her bedside on April 1, 2009, in Bozeman, Montana. She was born April 23, 1925, in Providence, Rhode Island, to Arthur B. and Inez (French) Lewis.

Ruth was raised with her brothers and sisters in Wendell Depot, Massachusetts, until she joined the Army Air Corps. While stationed in Germany, Ruth met Bob Thibeault, and after receiving their Honorable Discharges they were married in Wendell on July 17, 1949. They went to college in Ohio on the GI Bill. After graduating in 1952, they migrated to the west and began raising their family, adding some graduate degrees and pursuing teaching careers.

Ruth began teaching in the Bozeman schools in the mid-'60s, spending most of her time as a Guidance Counselor in the High School until her retirement in 1992. She was a fierce advocate for kids and especially for those who needed a swift kick in the pants, which she often delivered herself.

Her interests outside of the classroom were many and varied. When she wasn't following her own kids around to their events, she once tried her hand at artwork and piano. Those efforts and domestic pursuits were not her strength. She was much better suited to athletics. She played basketball while in high school; set three or four national records in one day in Masters Track; won many races with the Wind Drinkers running club; earned a letter on the Bozeman High Track team throwing the javelin (in her adult years, she confessed she was not particularly good at it); and ran a marathon in her mid-50s.

After retiring, Ruth kept busy with her community of friends. She sang in The Sweet Adelines for many years; tended to her oasis of trees and shrubs, and a variety of creatures at home; and reconnected with her brothers and sisters. Ruth and Bob actively played in the outdoors and appreciated what the four seasons had to offer in Montana.

In her later years, Ruth developed an ever-expanding group of young friends who knew her as "Grandma Ruth." She knew what was important to a pre-teen and always had an understanding ear, along with jelly beans, mixed with a few words of advice, both for the youngster and their parents. Last fall, one young friend took her to his grade school class to use her for show and tell. After his very good presentation, they had a discussion about the election process and one of his classmates asked Ruth if she had voted for Lincoln. Always the teacher, Ruth was able to maintain her composure long enough to come up with an answer that fit the moment.

Ruth touched many lives. Most of us are better for it.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Bob.

Ruth is survived by their three sons and their wives, Brete (Marie) of Big Timber, MT, Mark (Diane) of Gallatin Gateway, MT, and Kevin (Deb) of Driggs, ID; and by her brothers and sisters.