



## Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali

June 28, 1943 - January 10, 2025

Nancy Jean Coble Governali passed away peacefully in the loving embrace of her family on January 10, 2025. She was a devoted wife of 57 years to her husband Joseph; mother of two sons, Joseph and Matthew; mother-in-law to Natalie and Stephanie; and loving Nana to three grandchildren, Mia, James and Henry.

Nancy was born in Middletown, Pennsylvania in 1943. She was a true "War Baby" with her father soon to be serving with the Navy in the Pacific. She attended Middletown schools and talked about being so proud to have carried the American flag as part of the band front of her high school marching band. She developed her love of the out-of-doors through many years of scouting. After high school, she attended West Chester State College where she majored in physical education. A highlight of her time there was performing in a production of the musical Carousel, which fit well with her lifelong love of music and theater. Her academic performance there resulted in graduate assistantship offers from several universities to pursue her master's degree. She selected The University of Illinois where she met her future husband, Joseph. She taught in the aquatics program at the University and introduced lacrosse to her classes of college women who had never seen or heard of lacrosse. So impressive was her teaching that her classes were videotaped for future use.

At the end of her master's program she was offered a research assistantship to work on a doctorate degree. By that time, however, she already had a very good job offer in hand, decided to start the new job and return to Illinois summers to initiate doctorate study. The new teaching job brought her to Long Island and a burgeoning school district that included SUNY Stony Brook. She and Joe married in 1967 and at the end of four great teaching years on Long Island, the family had their first son, Joseph. A week later the family went back to Illinois and school for her husband. Nancy became a devoted mom to her new baby and they were inseparable. Nancy loved to travel the Big Ten campus with her son tucked into the carriage and a bit later biked with her baby on the back of a very early edition of a child bike seat. After two years at the University, the family moved to the Chicago area and began life in the suburb of Oak Park, where Nancy enjoyed the proximity to Chicago.

The family had their second son, Matthew, at the end of two years in Oak Park and then headed east to be closer to family and Joe's job at SUNY Cortland. Nancy put off a return to teaching because she wanted to devote all her time to her two baby boys. She was the consummate mother. As the boys got a little older, she became deeply involved in volunteer work using her aquatics expertise to teach in a variety of programs including fearful swimming for adults and the summer swim program for kids. Once the boys were in school, she obtained a job at the College's campus school where she taught Health Education, Physical Education and even served as the school "nurse" for a while.

When the campus school closed, Nancy reinvented herself by taking advantage of her long-standing math skills and love of the subject. She pursued teaching certification in math and in the process ended with having at least five different teaching certifications and competence in computer programming. After filling a one-year-leave position in Homer she started her long teaching career at the Cortland Junior Senior High School. She was so

happy teaching middle school math and adored the kids. In retirement she regularly encountered past students who always had positive comments about her teaching and recalled some of the fun things they remembered from her classes. She loved teaching at Cortland, was known for her early morning arrivals and late afternoon departures and enjoyed assisting in the early days of the girl's lacrosse program. She was so very proud when she received the Peer Teaching Award in recognition of her work at the school.

Nancy retired early to help her mother deal with some health problems and an unexpected benefit of the early retirement was that she had new found time to spend on activities she enjoyed. She loved birding, travel, theater, gardening, visiting her boys' families, ice hockey and spending time with her beloved grandchildren. She treasured the time with her grandchildren and loved telling anyone who would listen about their academic, athletic and theatrical successes. She was full of life, gratitude and caring.

Nancy's legacy of educational commitment, cheerfulness, friendliness, charity, and devotion to family will be fondly remembered by all who were fortunate to have known her. She will be deeply and forever missed by her family.

Nancy was preceded in death by her parents John Coble and Dorothy Gollam Coble. She is survived by her husband Joseph; Sons Joseph (Natalie Ponder) and Matthew (Stephanie Goff); her brother Tom (Susan Rathfon); sisters-in-law Bernadette, Frances, Gloria, Terry and Susan; brothers-in-law Frank G, Felix, Tom, and Frank V; grandchildren Mia, James and Henry; and numerous nieces and nephews. Nancy loved and was devoted to her big family.

There will be a service at Grace and Holy Spirt Church in Cortland on Saturday, February 22, at 10:00 AM.

Donations in Nancy's memory can be made to Lime Hollow Nature Center and the Cortland Free Library.

Arrangements are under the direction of Riccardi Funeral Home, Cortland,  
N.Y.

[www.riccardifuneralhome.com](http://www.riccardifuneralhome.com)

# Tribute Wall

ML

“ Dear Dr. Governali,

*So sorry for your loss. I saw the notice in the Cortland Columns magazine. I have great memories of my time at Cortland and your classes and leadership.*

*Michael Ludwig*

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**Michael Ludwig** - June 03, 2025 at 06:39 PM

JG

“ *My sincere condolences to you Joe, Joey, Matt, and family. I was so saddened to hear of Nancy's passing. I was enlightened and amazed in reading of her life's experiences before we met when Matt was in my class at the Campus School. She was always very supportive of me and my teaching at that school and beyond. I'll always be grateful for that. I DO have to admit that it was/is my fault that the boys got into hockey. Apparently, that curse continues into the next generation? I'll never forget the time that you guys blew an engine in that old (green?) VW on the way to a game (in Hamilton?) in the bitter cold. Somehow, you got Matt to the game - which we all know, was the most important thing. I'll always remember that smile Nancy would give me. She'd make a comment to me, or challenge me in some way and then turn her head slightly with a big smile waiting for me to respond. Cherish the memories. She will always be in your hearts. Jeff*

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**Jeff Gebhardt** - February 22, 2025 at 10:43 AM

C2

“ Cortland High Class of 2003 purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali.



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**Cortland High Class of 2003** - February 21, 2025 at 07:49 AM

FC

“ From Ann Casey-Smith planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali.

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**From Ann Casey-Smith** - February 20, 2025 at 08:46 PM

FC

“ From Ann Casey-Smith purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali.



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**From Ann Casey-Smith** - February 20, 2025 at 08:46 PM

CA

“ Cortland Applebees planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali.

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**Cortland Applebees** - February 20, 2025 at 08:07 PM

CA

“ *Cortland Applebees purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali.*



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**Cortland Applebees** - February 20, 2025 at 08:07 PM

JC

“ *I'm so sorry to hear this. Nancy was an amazing teacher, colleague and friend. Sending healing prayers to the family.*

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**Julie Along Carr** - February 18, 2025 at 11:05 PM

TN

“ *I'm so sorry for your loss Governali family! Your mom/wife was absolutely beautiful! She touched my heart so much through out my HS years and after, starting as my 8th grade math teacher, but a friend for many years after! Mrs. Governali's kindness and love was felt by so many, including me. I'm so grateful for the beautiful memories! She was a role model for so many of us, and I'm so happy I was able to learn from her and feel her love and kindness. May her beautiful memories help during this hard time! Much love to all! Tara Deasy (Neff)*



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**Tara Deasy Neff** - February 17, 2025 at 10:18 AM

CC

“*Condolences to the Governali family! I enjoyed having Nancy as a fellow colleague at CHS and having the privilege of teaching her son, Joe. She was a wonderful person with a heart of gold and a humble soul!! I was blessed to have taught with her, share teaching areas with her, and learn many amazing lessons from her!! Nancy, until we meet again, I will miss your lovely smile, annual Christmas letters, and your wonderful human kindness!!*

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**Connie Doody Chase** - February 17, 2025 at 12:51 AM

KA

*Hey Joe and boys, Nancy was always a smiling face every time I saw her! I know that she is smiling in heaven!*

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**karen** - March 06, 2025 at 07:59 PM

KB

“*I am so sorry for your loss. We lived next to the Governalie family on Parker Ave. Nancy was a kind, funny and cared deeply for the education of students at CHS. I am glad our paths got to cross.*  
*Kathy Brown*

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**Kathy Brown** - February 15, 2025 at 11:38 AM

ML

“ Nancy was a kind and caring person who would always put others FIRST. She truly cared that others were taken care of before herself. It meant family first.

Her active community participation was felt by her volunteering and care to those in need .

To all the many years as a math teacher at Cortland High School, student got the chance to learn from the best.

Her family must know that their mom/wife of 57 years was the 'Simply The Best !'

She will be remembered in our hearts 💕💕

John and Mary Leary

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**Mary Leary** - February 15, 2025 at 08:10 AM

CA

“ Our deepest sympathies, so many of us worked with Nancy over the years.

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**Cortland Area Retired Teachers' Associat** - February 14, 2025 at 03:07 PM

TS

“ Tammy Sickmon purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Mrs. Nancy Jean Coble Governali.



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**Tammy Sickmon** - February 13, 2025 at 05:26 PM

TS

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. Nancy was an amazing woman whose kind heart and warm smile touched so many people's lives. She loved her family and community and we will forever cherish all that she meant to us. I will always remember her wonderful stories and her ability to make you feel like you were the most important person in the room. Her compassionate and loving nature spread to those all around her. The world has lost an extraordinary woman, but her influence on our lives will remain eternally.

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**Tammy Sickmon** - February 13, 2025 at 05:18 PM