



## Sandra Louise Wesley

August 2, 1939 - October 15, 2025

National award-winning journalist, Sandra (Sandy) Louise Wesley, of Boca Raton, Florida, died peacefully at Story Point Assisted Living in Grand Ledge, Michigan on October 15, 2025. She was 86.

Sandy was born on August 2, 1939, to Margaruete (dec. 1999) and Charles (dec 1980) Wesley, in Buffalo, New York. Her older brother and sister, Gene and Nellie, preceded her in death.

Due to birth complications, the doctor informed Sandy's mother that Sandy would have a slight cerebral palsy, which affected her motor skills throughout life. This would be the first challenge in her remarkable life.

Her parents were people of great faith and love and made it their mission to help Sandy learn all the things she needed to prepare her to attend school on the normal timeline. The family moved back to Detroit Michigan when Sandy was 6, and there she was a student at St. Francis De Sales Catholic School. They loved Detroit because Sandy had aunts, uncles, cousins, and a grandfather there, all of whom they had many happy times with through the years. Sandy and her cousin, Jackie Beardsley, became great friends. Sandy's close playmate was her friend of the same age, Dorothy, and the two of them stayed in touch all these years.

At the age of nine, her second great challenge was revealed by a routine

hearing exam by an audiologist at school. Possibly due to the prior diagnosis of cerebral palsy, and partly due to the fact she had learned to read lips on her own, no one realized until then that she was hearing impaired. This explained why she had been slow to talk and was struggling her first few years in school; she could barely hear. She then received her first hearing aid, which helped enough that she was even able to learn to play the piano.

Over the years she would gradually lose what was left of her hearing, but each time her hearing worsened, technology would offer a stronger, smaller, better hearing aid, and wonderful things like closed captions, and volume controls on telephone receivers.

All of this meant that her career choice of journalism would be difficult, but it was possible; and for Sandy it was truly a labor of love.

She had known since the 7th grade that she would one day be a journalist. She loved both to read and write, but other subjects didn't come as easily to her, which made getting into college a little problematic. As always, Sandy kept the faith and just followed God's call to journalism and a wonderful path came to her. She attended the University of Detroit where she was accepted conditionally. Upon her acceptance Dean Seinbeck told her, "Sandra, you will find once you are out in the world, the educated, intelligent people will accept you for who you are." This helped her to find her self-confidence. She went to the Varsity News, the paper on campus, and begged for a position on the paper. The answer was "no." The answer stayed "no" every day for a month, until her tenacity finally paid off and they tossed her a story just to get rid of her. By the end of her first semester she was the Society Editor and being paid a small salary, too.

Shortly after graduating, Sandra moved with her parents to Boca Raton, Florida, where they had decided to retire. They left Detroit on November 1st and by Thanksgiving she was hired as a reporter for The Boca Raton News and they even gave her a Yashika Mat camera and a couple rolls of film. She

was on the ground floor of this small but growing weekly paper. It was soon published three days a week, and then five plus a weekend edition. She loved her work and her co-workers, and Boca Raton. The Dean at U of D had been right, Sandy was not only accepted for who she was, but celebrated.

In 1967 she won second place for weeklies in the National JC Penney/University of Missouri Journalism Award for Excellence, along with \$500, an all expenses paid trip to the awards banquet, and was scheduled to teach a week of workshops to other journalists. The next year they awarded her first place and a prize of \$1000, and the next year as well. Along with covering local things such as the dedication of Florida Atlantic University, and planning and zoning meetings, creation of the women's pages and church pages, she interviewed celebrities. A couple that were memorable for her were the actress Dorothy Lamour and the up and coming tv star, Flipper.

In 1970, the Editor of the Boca Raton News, John Opel, left for the Palm Beach Post and he persuaded Sandy to go, too. At the Post, she worked as an investigative reporter under the award-winning editor, Barbara Somerville. While there she did investigative series on a wide variety of topics, everything from foster homes, to runaways, to the Charismatic movement in the Catholic Church, to school cafeterias, and elderly people being evicted from their trailer park by the Port of Palm Beach so they could build where houses there. As with the Boca Raton News, she was also able to interview celebrities, her favorite being Arthur Treacher, the actor-turned franchise restaurateur.

Although she was a busy journalist, she always found time to entertain friends and relatives who would visit them at their home in Florida. Her knowledge of all things social in and around South Florida made her the ultimate Auntie to her young nieces and nephew. She took them to exotic restaurants like Patricia Murphy's and on tours of places like the historic mansion, Viscaya,

and to watch alligator wrestling, and to Sanibel Island, Key West, and dozens of trips to Spanish River Park to play at the ocean. Sandy always found the energy before bedtime to read to them from the book of Alfred Hitchcock stories she had bought for them. The best stories she told though, were her own made up stories, like the one about the naughty little girl who was turned into a banshee. As little girls we greatly admired our very cool Aunt Sandy. She was like a real life Barbie, with a fabulous career, her own column in the paper, and stylish clothes on her tall slender body.

At the Palm Beach Post, Sandy was eventually assigned the home and design section, which was a busy business in Palm Beach, but she also enthusiastically wrote feature stories on historic properties. She loved this kind of writing and even won the American Furniture Mart's prestigious Dorothy Dawe Award. They flew her to Chicago where they awarded her a silver bowl, and gave her a trophy for The Palm Beach Post. Her coverage of the housing market in Palm Beach was so interesting her stories sometimes made the front page.

In the mid-1970s she began also covering Boca Raton, and as part of that she covered a big story when Glades Road was to be extended right through the middle of Pearl City, an historic black neighborhood. She not only reported on this but became an alternate member of the Housing Advisory Board in order to advocate for the homeowners there.

In the late 1970s she once again changed papers, this time going to the Delray Beach News-Journal where she wrote feature stories, covered city hall, police, fire, and politics. It was at one of these city council meetings where a man approached her and asked if she could help him investigate an old cemetery he had discovered along I-95. She went there the next day to find it a run-down mess of toppled headstones, cement casings, and weeds. Only one grave, that of a 6 year old boy, was being cared for. When she went to the

city of Boynton Beach to find out about it they were not helpful. It took weeks of sleuthing but she finally found an employee at the Palm Beach County offices who eagerly shared the information with her, since he was black and it happened to be a black cemetery from back during the time of segregation.

Sandy discovered that the Federal Government was given permission to put I-95 through the cemetery as long as they relocated all the graves, but as they got into the project they decided it was too much work, and just left the remaining disturbed graves, curving the freeway around them. After Sandy had broken the story of this neglect, bringing it to the public's attention, many of the other papers reported on it as well, and what remained of the cemetery was restored and once again cared for. It is now called Barton Memorial Park Cemetery, bearing the family name of the little boy who was buried there.

In 1980, Sandy returned to The Boca Raton News. It was the age of the first PCs and she grew to love them. For the next decade she wrote editorials and stories, but as her hearing worsened it became harder to do interviews on the phone. Still, she was able to get even stronger hearing aids and carry on for a while.

Sandy's mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's when Sandy was 50. When her mother needed fulltime care Sandy hired a daytime nurse's aide, Pansy, a lovely Jamaican woman, who tended to her mother during the work day, since she didn't have the option to stay home with her. She wanted to care for her mother at home as long as she possibly could.

About this time Sandy's role at the paper shifted. The Boca Raton News sent her to Philadelphia for a week to learn Knight Ridder's new electronic library system so she could become the new librarian and enter the existing library into Knight-Ridder's computerized system. When the paper could no longer afford the electronic system, Sandy became a features editor.

Eventually Sandy found herself in a soul-crushing situation beyond her control; the demise of newspapers, and her job at the Boca Raton News. She was 61 years old, practically deaf, and out looking for a job in a field that was obsolete. Adding to her misery was the death of her mother the previous year. Then, a good friend, Pat Wilson, connected her with her editor at the Boynton Beach Times where she was hired to write social columns and feature stories, until she was able to retire at the age of 62.

After her mother's death, Sandy downsized to a condo in the San De Vance development, where she made more friends and continued to stay active.

Even in her retirement she wrote newsletters for her condo association and Women's Circle. She was an active parishoner at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church where she became a Eucharistic Minister. She had been a member of the Florida Press Club, Council of Catholic Women, and was a member of a Cursillo prayer group with many beloved friends, including her former co-worker, Julia Fitzpatrick. These women gathered often to pray for the sick or anyone who needed prayers.

In 2005 Sandy received the first of two cochlear implants which partially restored her ability to hear, although not as she remembered things sounding. Still, she was able to hear music again, and that brought her joy.

In 2010 she wrote an autobiography, *The Scoop: A Journey from Silence*. She dedicated it to her "loving family." We loved it.

To save money, she eventually sold the San De Vance condo and bought one in Century City, a gated retirement community, and once again became friends with her neighbors. They would help each other and text each other

frequently to check up on each other. She was able to shop online and stay independent but when Covid hit, like so many other people, she became inactive. She fought back by having both hips replaced, but the recoveries were slow and hard.

As independent as she could be, her close friends and neighbors knew she was having a lot of trouble getting around without falling. So many of these angels helped Sandy when she needed it. Everything from giving her rides, to helping her fix her phone or set up Captel for her, or fix something broken, to visiting her when she was recovering from a hip surgery and even spending the night with her.

After several trips to the hospital via the EMTs, in May of 2024 she agreed to move to the Story Point Assisted Living Community in Grand Ledge, Michigan, where she would be close to her God daughter, Lorraine. While there, she missed her independent life in sunny Boca Raton, and all her old friends, but it was tempered by having her niece and her family close by to visit with. In this past year and a half at Story Point she made many sweet friends who brightened every day. She felt the kindness and care of the caregivers there, who were patient and understanding.

Sandy is greatly missed by her many friends and remaining relatives. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated Tuesday, December 9, 2025 at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, Boca Raton, Florida. Arrangements by the Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home, Grand Ledge. Share your memories and condolences online at [holihanatakin.com](http://holihanatakin.com).

# Previous Events

## Funeral Mass

DEC 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Joan Arc Catholic Church  
370 SW 3rd Street  
Boca Raton, FL 33432

# Tribute Wall

KM

“ It was an honor to be present at Sandra’s Funeral Mass today & meet her caring nieces. After hearing Father Nestor’s great tribute to Sandra, I know I needed to read about her amazing life story. May God Bless her soul & all who care about her so deeply.

*Ken McCoy  
St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church  
Funeral Ministry*

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**Ken McCoy** - December 09, 2025 at 02:19 PM

SL

“ Sandy was a wonderful person who was a great friend to my late mom and a pillar of our community here in Boca Raton. I worked with her in the early 2000's at the Boca Raton News, where she was the News librarian at the time. She was kind and generous with her extensive knowledge and experience- a true journalism professional. I will always remember her big smile and quirky sense of humor. Im glad to have known her.

*Susanna Laurenti-Weiser  
Boca Raton FL*

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**Susanna Laurenti-Weiser** - November 06, 2025 at 10:29 PM



“ 25 files added to the album Memories Album



Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home - October 28, 2025 at 09:47 AM

KV

“ We enjoyed getting to know Sandy at SP. She told many stories, with great detail, about growing up & her career working for newspapers. I send my condolences to her nieces. Karen VanHouten (Lyle's wife)

Karen VanHouten - October 22, 2025 at 06:47 AM

JH

This is so thoughtful of you Karen. I am so incredibly devastated to have heard this news. My deepest thoughts and prayers are with the family as well.

Jennifer Host - October 22, 2025 at 11:08 PM