



Charlotte T. Zietlow

October 21, 1934 - November 5, 2025

It is with a heavy heart and deep respect that we share the passing of Charlotte T. Zietlow of Bloomington, Indiana – a notable public servant, community advocate and catalyst whose life touched many. Charlotte went peacefully at the age of 91.

Born October 21, 1934, to Gilbert and Margaret Thiele in Milwaukee, WI. Longtime sweethearts Charlotte and Paul tied the knot in 1957. The couple moved to Bloomington, Indiana in 1964, and Charlotte quickly immersed herself in the life of the city and county. Her roots in scholarship and teaching, and her love of cookbooks and international culture, enriched her public work with a broad worldview.

She held advanced academic credentials: a Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctorate in German and French literature and linguistics. She taught at the university level before transitioning into civic life. Charlotte's contributions to Bloomington and Monroe County were vast, having created not only transformed the political landscape but also had a major impact on the climate of Bloomington culture. In 1971 when she was elected to be a member of the Bloomington City Council only to later become its first female president. She would repeat this pattern in 1980; when she won the election to the Board of Commissioners for Monroe County, becoming the first woman to serve in that role and take the presidency again. In her 50-year career in public service, she ran for mayor twice, once in 1975 and again in 1987.

Charlotte ran as a general candidate for the United States House of

Representatives in 1974 for the Democratic primary (which she lost) and 1978 when she won the primary but lost in the general to incumbent John Myers. Both of those races were in the 7th District. Charlotte was appointed to the Board of Trustees at Indiana State University and served as President of the Board.

Beyond elective office, she engaged in a cornucopia of nonprofit leadership roles becoming the Executive Director of United Way of Monroe County (1988-1990), Chair of the Sanger Endowment Fund at Planned Parenthood of Southern Indiana, Co-founder of the gourmet kitchen shop "Goods Inc.", and her work with Middle way house.

Charlotte is survived by her daughter, Rebecca Zietlow; her son, Nathan Zietlow, and three granddaughters, Alice Koeninger, Zoe Koeninger, and Nina Zietlow.

We will all remember the woman of many hats both figuratively and literally. Charlotte was widely known for her tenacity, her progressive vision, and her willingness to challenge the status quo.

Charlotte's passing marks the end of a remarkable era of leadership and service in Bloomington and Monroe County. As the community reflects on her legacy, we remember her pioneering spirit, her passion for historic preservation, and her representation of the people.

Those wishing to honor Charlotte's memory might consider donations to one of the many organizations she supported: historic preservation in Bloomington, domestic violence prevention (such as Middle Way House), or civic leadership training for young women in public service.

Charlotte is preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Paul, and her grandson, Henry Zietlow.

Allen Funeral Home is handling the arrangements and cremation rites have

been accorded. There are no services scheduled at this time.

Her life reminds us that one person's enduring commitment can shape the character of a city, lift voices that are historically under-represented, and leave a mark not just in buildings, but in relationships, civic culture, and community hope.

Our hats are off to you now, Charlotte.

Tribute Wall

EC

“Charlotte was a shining light and an incredible role model. May her memory be for a blessing.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Cline - November 17, 2025 at 08:58 AM

JC

“The memory I wish to share is about Charlotte's dissertation. She and I met as grad students at IU in the early 1960s. One of her interests in grad school was older Germanic languages - an interest I shared. To me, historical linguistics is like archaeology, except that you study language, not excavated objects. For her dissertation, Charlotte analyzed an obscure, ancient Gothic manuscript that had not been studied in depth before. Gothic is an East Germanic language that died out in the 6th century CE. I don't remember the content of the manuscript Charlotte studied, but I remember her saying that the manuscript was so little known, she was probably the only person in the world who could read her dissertation critically! - A typical Charlotte sentiment, right to the point, honest and unsentimental. I remember Charlotte for so many accomplishments, leadership, and impact on Bloomington. We will miss her!

Jeanette Clausen

Jeanette Clausen - November 12, 2025 at 09:10 PM