

From the Wednesday, September 28, 2011 edition of the Kankakee Journal:

Visitation for Madelyn R. Merwin, 87, of Manteno, will be from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. today, and from 10 a.m. Thursday until the 11 a.m. funeral services at the Clancy-Gernon Funeral Home in Manteno. Burial will be in Elmwood Cemetery, Manteno. Memorials may be made to the American Diabetes Association in memory of her son, William DeBouck, who preceded her in death in 1999, or to Hospice of Kankakee Valley. She died Monday (Sept. 26, 2011) at her home. She was born July 29, 1924, in Kankakee, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar "Buzz" and Viola Bourell. The family moved to Waukegan in 1927 where she attended local schools. In 1934, Mr. Bourell was transferred to Evanston where Madelyn graduated from Evanston Township High School and attended Northwestern University's Chicago campus for a short time. In June of 1951 she married Donald P. Merwin in Kankakee. Mrs. Merwin's journalistic career began in 1949 when she joined the staff of The Daily Journal as a society reporter and columnist. When she and her family moved to Joliet, she was employed as managing editor of Illinois' then-largest weekly newspaper, The Spectator, followed by several years in radio at WJOL, Joliet, as early morning news editor and on-the-air personality. It was during her stint at WJOL Mrs. Merwin was elected a director on the board of the Illinois News Broadcasters Association, the first woman to hold office in the INBA's predominately male membership. Moving to Louisville, Ky., Mrs. Merwin joined the staff of The National Horseman, a monthly magazine for show horse owners, as senior editor. She later moved to WHAS' radio division, and then to WHAS television, where she was editor and producer of an hourlong news program, again the first woman in the newsroom. Also while in Louisville, she recorded Talking Books for the blind under the auspices of the Library of Congress. The Merwin family returned to Illinois in 1968 and Mrs. Merwin joined the staff of Star Newspapers in Chicago Heights. She ultimately became the first woman at The Star to be named an associate editor on the news side. Her last full-time job for Star Newspapers was senior editor of the arts and entertainment weekly magazine. Merwin retired in January of 1990 but continued to write a weekly question and answer travel column for The Star as well as The Daily Herald newspapers in Arlington Heights and The Daily Journal in Kankakee. She also wrote travel features for Elite Magazine and The Daily Southtown. Merwin was a member of the Society of American Travel Writers, the Midwest Travel Writers Association, Manteno United Methodist Church and co-founder and past president of the Manteno Historical Society. She was a former member of the Manteno Board of Zoning Appeals, the Manteno Police Pension Board and the Manteno Library Board and editor of Manteno Memo, a village newsletter. She was a former volunteer at the Illinois Veterans Home at Manteno and the Meals on Wheels program. In 1994 she was named Manteno Citizen of the Year and Kankakee County Citizen of the Year in the civic category. In 1995 she was commissioned a Kentucky Colonel by the governor of Kentucky for her contribution to the tourism industry of that state. She is survived by her husband, Don; two daughters, Donna Ann and Patrick Hayes, of Virginia Beach, Va., and Paula Jett, of Manteno; 11 grandchildren who called her Bonka, Carolyn and Kevin Mohr, of Midlothian, Va., Patrick and Chrissi Hayes, of Virginia Beach, Greg and Pam Hayes, of Fayetteville, N.C., Cheryl Lynn and Shawn Mohr, Jason and Adrian Hayes, and Nicholas Clark, all of Virginia Beach, Shane Clark (Amanda Rae) of Rochester, N.Y., Heather DeBouck and Melanie DeBouck, of Orange County, Calif., Jennifer and Todd Yarno, of Manteno, and Melissa Jett, of Manteno; one sister and brother-in-law, Patricia and Norman "Bud" Hartman, of Manteno; 20 great-grandchildren; and two nieces. She was preceded in death by her parents; one son, William DeBouck; and one son-in-law, Donald Jett. Please sign her guestbook at clancygernon.com. (Pd.)