



Shirley JoAnn Connelly

October 3, 1934 - August 18, 2023

Shirley Connelly loved phone calls from her grandchildren.

Before she was a kindergartener, granddaughter Kate Connelly learned how to dial Shirley. Kate loved talking and Shirley loved listening. Unwilling to hang up, Kate once read part of the phone book to her grandmother. Shirley stayed on the line.

Shirley devoted her life to children. She raised four kids, taught third grade at Hansen Elementary School in Cedar Falls, Iowa, for 25 years, and doted on her seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Even when she moved into assisted living at age 88, she insisted on bringing along shelves of children's books.

Shirley JoAnn Connelly died Aug. 18, 2023, of heart failure at University Hospitals & Clinics in Iowa City. She was 88 years old.

A lifelong Iowan, Shirley was born in Cedar County on Oct. 3, 1934, the second surviving child of Harry and Anvy Spear. In an oral history that Shirley wrote with her mother, when Shirley's 10-year-old brother came home from school the day she was born, "he wondered what her name was. Kay Roseanne was to have been her name, but he said, 'Her name is Shirley JoAnn.' When Harry came in I told him, and Harry said he liked it, too. And

with that her name was Shirley.”

Shirley grew up on a farm northeast of Tipton. She helped milk the cows every day and, as her mother said in the oral history, “worked outside a lot, both in the fields and doing chores.” But her childhood years also included regular Saturday movie matinees in Tipton and shopping trips to Armstrong’s in Cedar Rapids. Her father liked buying clothes and jewelry for Shirley and her younger sister.

After graduating from Tipton Consolidated Schools in 1952, Shirley went to Iowa State College (now University), graduating in 1956 with a degree in home economics education. She married her longtime beau and Tipton classmate, Kay Connelly, on Sept. 4, 1955, at the start of their senior year at Iowa State. They lived and worked in the Iowa towns of Montezuma, Allison, Ames and – for the last 55 years – Cedar Falls. Shirley died 17 days before their 68th wedding anniversary.

Shirley believed in education. When her youngest child started first grade, she went back to college, earning an elementary education certificate from the University of Northern Iowa. She taught third grade at Hansen Elementary School for 25 years.

Most of all, Shirley treasured family. For a year and a half, she recorded conversations with her mother to produce a 1987 oral history of her mother’s life. In 2012, she published a family cookbook full of pictures and recipes. Among the favorites: French breakfast puffs and porcupine meatballs. Her favorite show wasn’t on television. It was an internet-connected picture frame showing photos posted by her children and grandchildren. It sat facing her favorite chair.

She was a member of PEO Chapter KL, an organization that provides

scholarships for women in education.

Shirley is survived by her husband, Kay; her four children, Mike (Meg Mahoney), Jeff (Diana), Kim Heise (Jim) and Julie Stewart (Jim); seven grandchildren, Ashley Heise, Kristin (Heise) Mason, Kate Connelly, Erin Connelly, Matt Stewart, Tina Connelly and Maria Stewart; and six great-grandchildren, Tobias, Emadelle and Malachi Mason, and Conor, Isla and Emery Moll. She is also survived by her sister, Rosalyn Hill, and sister-in-law Katherine Connelly.

Services will be 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 22, 2023, at the United Church of Christ in Cedar Falls, with a visitation at the church starting at 9:30 a.m. A luncheon will follow the service. After the luncheon, burial will be at Hillside Cemetery in Cedar Falls.

Memorials may be made to Western Home Foundation or PEO Chapter KL.

Cemetery Details

Hillside Cemetery

Lone Tree Road
Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(319) 273-8628

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 22. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (CT)

United Church of Christ
9204 University Ave
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Funeral Service

AUG 22. 10:30 AM (CT)

United Church of Christ
9204 University Ave
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Tribute Wall

DG

“ I taught with Shirley at Hansen El for 9 years and enjoyed every minute of it. Kay and family, you were blessed to have her be a part of your lives. Saddened to realize your loss. Fond memories will allow time to go by easier. May she rest in peace. Thoughts and prayers , Don and Sue Gibson.

Don and Sue Gibson - August 22, 2023 at 03:02 PM



“ Our deepest sympathies to Kay and family. Larry, Aloha, Lexi and Lacy Oudekerk

Aloha Oudekerk - August 22, 2023 at 08:37 AM



“ Prayers and thoughts are with you in your loss. Greta Cordes

Greta Cordes - August 21, 2023 at 07:22 PM

CI

“ Country Landscapes, Inc. purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Shirley JoAnn Connelly.



Country Landscapes, Inc. - August 21, 2023 at 10:11 AM

CI

“ Country Landscapes, Inc. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley JoAnn Connelly.

Country Landscapes, Inc. - August 21, 2023 at 10:11 AM

CM

“ So sorry for your loss Jeff, Diana, and Tina. She was a wonderful lady and so sweet when she visited in Texas. Hugs to family and prayers for peace.

*McNally Family
Santa Fe, Tx*

Christina McNally - August 20, 2023 at 11:25 PM



“ A grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Shirley JoAnn Connelly.

August 20, 2023 at 09:42 PM

GL

“ I didn't get to spend a lot of time with Shirley but I do remember we could always visit about school and teaching. I know she loved teaching and of course we could always talk about our own children. She will be greatly missed!

Gloria Lotz - August 20, 2023 at 07:45 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Shirley JoAnn Connelly.



August 20, 2023 at 03:13 PM

LM

“ *I enjoyed working with Shirley at Hansen Elementary. She was a great teacher and a sweet kind lady.* Linda Mahncke

Linda Mahncke - August 20, 2023 at 01:48 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Shirley JoAnn Connelly.*



August 20, 2023 at 12:45 PM

BE

“ *Celebrate a beautiful life of a very special lady! Shirley always had a sweet smile and a gentle greeting to share. I always felt so welcome when in her company. Love & hugs to her family & friends!*

Becky - August 19, 2023 at 07:45 PM

NO

“ *She was the best teacher ever. I so enjoyed working with her.*

Nona - August 19, 2023 at 07:38 PM