

Sharon Petersen, 77

March 31, 1936 - Feb. 25, 2014

HARLAN — Sharon Joanne Petersen was born on March 31, 1936, to Willard and Grace (Focht) Lawson at the family home near Raymond, NE. She graduated from Raymond High School in 1953. Sharon attended the University of Nebraska and taught two years in a rural school.

September 4, 1955, Sharon was united in marriage to Gayle Petersen at the Raymond Methodist Church. Their marriage was blessed with four children: Rick, Shelli, Gaige and Gary. Sharon was baptized at Bethel Baptist Church of Harlan, where she was a longtime active member and served faithfully. In 2011, she joined First Baptist Church of Harlan. After her children were grown, Sharon worked as Activity Director at the Baptist Memorial Home in Harlan. Later, Sharon was coordinator for the Commanders Club of the Shelby County State Bank for twenty-five years where she traveled the world and made many friends.

Volunteerism and working with people were a large part of Sharon's life. She served on the Shelby County Fair Board and was active in 4-H. Sharon was named to the Hall of Fame of the Shelby County Fair in 1998, and the Iowa 4-H Hall of Fame in 2009. Over the years, Sharon was involved in many community organizations including the Harlan Band Parents, Nishna Valley Business Women, Hospital Auxiliary, and Relay for Life. She loved singing and performing with the Western Iowa Arts Association. She was a PEO member and she treasured her friends in her local LNO club. She received the Shelby County Chamber of Commerce "Special Appreciation" award in 1995 and was named "Shelby County Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year" in 2010. Sharon recently authored and published her first book "My 25 Years as a Bank CEO! (Chief Entertainment Organizer)," and was working on her second book titled "I Will Dominate."

Sharon's most precious earthly possessions were her children and family. She loved to provide a comfortable home where her children and grandchildren would gather for good food and good times. Grandma Sharon loved to attend and support her grandkids in all of their activities. She encouraged and praised and offered lots of 'I love you's.' Birthdays were always marked with a special song. Vacationing at Okoboji, family Christmas programs and flying kites on Easter were the fondest of family traditions. In 2004, Sharon was honored to be selected Shelby County Mother of the Year, and Iowa Merit Mother.

Sharon's hobbies and special interests included travel, taking pictures, decorating her home, entertaining, flower arranging, singing, baking, sewing, quilting, and Nebraska Cornhusker football. She loved compiling family memories into picture albums. She loved using her gift of hospitality and everyone was always welcome in her home. Sharon went home to be with her Lord peacefully on Tuesday evening, February 25, 2014, at Myrtue Medical Center in Harlan, surrounded by family and friends. At the time of her death she had been blessed with seventy-seven years, ten months and twenty-five days.

Sharon was preceded in death by her parents and sister Ruth. Those remaining to cherish Sharon's memory include her husband of fifty-eight years Gayle "Whitey" Petersen of Harlan; her children: Rick Petersen and his wife Judi of Atlantic, Shelli and her husband Jeffrey Larson of Harlan, Gaige Petersen of Harlan, and Gary Petersen and his wife Jo Lene of Harlan; ten grandchildren: Benjamin and Christopher Petersen, Elizabeth and Robert Larson, Justin, Jeffrey, Jordan and Jenna Petersen, and Ana and Ross Petersen; one brother Roger Lawson of Lincoln, NE; two sisters Donna Holka of Lincoln, NE, and Marilyn Peterson of Lincoln, NE; nieces, nephews, other relatives and many friends.

Pastor Dan Hawn officiated the 10:00 a.m. funeral service on Saturday, March 1, 2014 at First Baptist Church in Harlan. The accompanist was Helen Warren, vocalists were Dawn Gardner, Hailey Andersen and Darla Hansen. Honorary casket bearers were Elizabeth Larson, Jenna Petersen, Ana Petersen, Roger Lawson, Donna Holka and Marilyn Petersen. Serving as casket bearers were Justin Petersen, Jeffrey Petersen, Jordan Petersen, Robert Larson, Benjamin Petersen, Christopher Petersen and Ross Petersen. Interment was in Rose Hill Cemetery in Kirkman.



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