



Shirley Petersen

February 14, 1953 - October 10, 2020

On Saturday, October 10, 2020, Shirley Petersen, beloved sister of six surviving siblings, went to heaven at age 67.

Shirley Petersen was born on February 14, 1953, in Grundy Center, IA to Rev. Henry and Irene Petersen. She was diagnosed with an intellectual disability at age 4. From ages 7 to 27, Shirley spent most of her time in special-needs boarding schools in Michigan, Washington, and Iowa.

When Shirley was 27, her parents retired to Michigan, and Shirley moved into a group home near them. Around that time, she started to work at Kandu Industries in western MI. Some of the jobs she did there included assembling boxes. After her parents passed away in the 1990s, Shirley moved in with her brother Don Petersen in Grand Haven, where she lived for 20 years. After Don was no longer able to take care of Shirley, she moved into a group home in Coopersville, MI, where she spent her last fourteen months under the loving care of Rochelle Rawlings.

Shirley was very affectionate and loved being with people. One of the things she enjoyed most was listening to music (the Beatles and Boston were two of her favorite bands) and dancing to it. She was also famous for her animal noises, especially pig! She loved chicken, Mountain Dew, and coffee. Shirley especially loved the Lord Jesus Christ and invited other people she met to join her in heaven. She often talked of going there to be with Jesus, Mom, and Dad.

Shirley was preceded in death by her father, Henry, her mother, Irene, and her brother, Dale. She is survived by her brothers Don, Karl, Ken, and Keith, as well as her sisters Sharon and Nancy. She is also survived by 19 nieces and nephews as well as many cousins. Because of COVID-19, Shirley's loved ones and friends are planning to have a virtual memorial service. Donations may be given to [Camp Sunshine]<https://www.campsunshinemichigan.org/support-us> or you can send donations to them at 291W. Lakewood Blvd. Suite G, Holland, MI 49424. Please sign the family's

online guestbook at www.sytsemafth.com.

Cemetery

Lake Forest Cemetery

1304 Lake Ave.

Grand Haven, MI, 49417

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services - October 19, 2020 at 11:37 AM



“ We will miss her, her hugs and her " I love you."

Marian and Leo DeGram - October 19, 2020 at 07:11 PM



“ I learned a lot about what it meant to be a loving and welcoming person from Shirley. It was so heartwarming to have her come to stand by you on a Sunday morning, tell you she loved you and then wait for a hug and response back. She was so generous with her hugs and smiles, and had a welcome spirit to all. What a wonderful example of God's love. Praying for God's comfort for all the family. She will be missed.

Deanne Brink - October 21, 2020 at 05:49 PM



“ Don and Family, From the time Shirley moved to Coopersville and thru COVID Shirley has been missed in our church. At church services when the pastor would address Shirley and Shirley would respond loudly back to him it warmed the heart to hear her and to know that she was a part of the family of God. There were occasions when a ride was needed for Shirley to attend church so I would pick her up in Spring Lake. After church we would have dinner and shirley would bring up the Beatles. We then would listen to The Beatles/1962-1966 CD. Shirley would sing along and dance a bit. Music made her happy. And if you could give her a can of pop a big smile would appear. Shirley's hugs and loving self will be missed. Dave and Karen Lankhorst.

Dave Lankhorst - October 21, 2020 at 12:40 PM



“ Don and family, we are very sorry to hear of Shirley's passing. She was so sweet always giving everyone hugs and telling everyone that she loved them. Her smile and laugh were definitely contagious.

Aaron and Pamela Parker

Aaron and Pamela Parker - October 20, 2020 at 09:38 PM



“ Thank you all for your wonderful words of comfort, remembrances, and expressions of love. A very special thanks to Pastor Bob for officiating Shirley's graveside committal service this morning. My siblings and I did not ask him to do this; he simply and graciously volunteered.

Shirley was my blood sister and, most importantly, my sister in Christ. I look forward to one day joining her, my brother Dale, Mom and Dad, and all of God's people throughout history in heaven in the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be all of the glory, forever and ever!

Keith Petersen - October 19, 2020 at 01:18 PM



“ Thank you all for your kind support. It's appreciated. I was her niece and she was a good and perfect aunt. This has been a time of grieving for us. I even created a local grieving group.

Julie Petersen - October 18, 2020 at 10:49 AM



“ Shirley was a joyful, energetic member of the body of Christ. She was a blessing to our congregation. We, the members of Little Farms Chapel, send to you our prayers in this time of sadness, but we celebrate Shirley's victory in Jesus. We will gather at 9am on Monday the 19th for a burial service. Pastor Bob Van Manen

Robert Van Manen - October 17, 2020 at 07:27 AM



“ We want to express our sympathy to the family at the passing away of Shirley. We've just knew her for a short time as we picked her up to attend Little Farms Chapel and had come to love her and her smile and the joy she found in attending church and just loving all the people. She is now in perfect joy and we celebrate that. She will always be in our hearts and we are so thankful for knowing her.
Pete and Jan VanStrien

Janice VanStrien - October 16, 2020 at 08:37 PM



“ Dear Don and family,
We were vary saddened to see the news about Shirley in the paper. We are thankful that we were able to get to know her when we lived next to your parents, and then Don. We enjoyed listening to her sing and watching her walk by our house with her mountain dew. She always would say hello and share her gleaming smile. We know that she is in God's hands now. We didn't know she was a Beatles and Boston fan. But knew she loved her coffee and mountain dew. But more importantly we know she loved all of you, everyone around her and the Lord. We will be keeping all of you in our prayers. Don, we know you are not on Waverly anymore. We would love to catch up with you where ever you are. Please feel free to send us an email at mbngkelly@hotmail.com Take care and know that we are feeling your loss. Love,
Mary and Brian Kelly

Mary Kelly - October 16, 2020 at 02:53 PM



“ She liked Boston. No way :). I like her better now :D

—Her nephew Will

Will - October 26, 2020 at 11:13 AM



“ I'm sad to hear of Shirley's passing. Two things I remember so clearly. First was her easy smile which brought light, second was a lesson that it's important to say "I love you" to people dear to our hearts. Shirley is missed.

Rob Louis - October 16, 2020 at 05:53 AM



“ Oh, if you've met her, you love her! Shirley and i got to know each other when i finally left factory work to start doing community living support. What a pleasure it was to volunteer at the north ottawa hospital cafeteria together, and then later see her everyday at kandu. Many friends will miss her smile and laughter!

Janet Fowler - October 15, 2020 at 07:02 PM



“ I wrote mine in the wrong spot so that should put a smile on everyone's face peace and Gods Blessings to all the family. My went under comment under her picture. She is in a much better place.

Fritz and Don Schiele - October 15, 2020 at 05:42 PM



“ I cannot express the love and sympathy I have for Shirleys passing.

The caption of the picture:

As many of you know, I am blessed to have the opportunity to work with special needs adults. So, let me tell you about this beam of light(I'm going to exclude her name) that I've gotten to know for the last year and a half. The first day we met I knew something clicked, almost as if it was a spiritual connection of sorts. She was always glued to my hip, always wondering where I was and what I was doing. We were with each other 3-4 days a week when she would come to our day program in holland. Everyday we were around each other she would always ask me: 'Josh, will you live with me in heaven?'. Now I'm not going to lie, the first time I was asked this, I was caught so off guard. But as the days went on, she would always continue to ask me this same question (sometimes as much as 10-15 times a day) and my answer was always 'yes, I will live with you in heaven.' Eventually as 2016 struck she was relocated to our day program in GrandHaven (was closer to where she lives). I was unable to see her as much...only once a week (and sometimes it was several weeks before I saw her), the transition was tough. But, we still did get to see each other, just not as frequently as what it used to be. So, since I'm not always able to be with her, my boss Amy Copeland Renda got a cardboard cut out of me for her for Christmas. So, that everyday she comes in she will always see me and be reminded by the sticky note stuck on the cardboard cut out, that states: 'Yes, I will live with you in heaven. -Josh' .



Josh Dozeman - October 15, 2020 at 04:57 PM



“ A veteran of Camp Sunshine, Shirley was a model of love and joy. We will miss her so very much. May all the goodness and grace and joy she embodied remain present in all you knew and loved her.

Mimi Bush - October 15, 2020 at 03:46 PM



“ I worked with Shirley at Kandu, she always had a smile for everyone and loved working. One of my favorite memories about her was when the participants were seeing how much each one weighed and Shirley said, “ Wait, I need to take off my pearls!” What joy she was to work with.

Cinda Stark - October 15, 2020 at 03:23 PM



“ So sorry to see of Shirley’s passing. She was always a bright light at Kandu.
Peg Beall

Peg Beall - October 15, 2020 at 02:34 PM



“ Shirley will be missed by all at First Church. She was such a dear person who enjoyed spending time with her church family and letting them know they were loved!
Todd and Mary Hamstra

Mary Hamstra - October 15, 2020 at 02:10 PM



“ Shirley will be missed. What an absolute blessing to be able to have known her through 1st CRC of Grand Haven and having the experience of seeing the love she shared with all of those around her! God Bless. Can't wait to see you in heaven some day.

TIM MCCAUSTLE - October 15, 2020 at 01:45 PM



“ Shirley will always live in our hearts as she was an integral part of our "family". Our thoughts and prayers are with her family.

Jan Palmer - October 15, 2020 at 01:43 PM



“ Don..sorry about the loss of your sister..she is in good hands now.
Judi Harris your friend from the GH post office. judih49456@gmail.com

judi harris - October 15, 2020 at 11:36 AM



“ Shirley was a member of the Friendship Club at our church and an inspiration to all. She was not shy and would sing or read in front of a church full of people. One of her favorite times was the annual Christmas party when she could have her picture taken with Santa Claus.



Harley Dyk - October 14, 2020 at 09:10 PM



“ I was fortunate enough to be Shirley's counselor this past year at Camp Sunshine. I've never met someone who radiated love as much as she did. I always looked forward to our coffee four times a day, dancing to The Beatles, and discussions about Christmas. Her laugh and smile were contagious.

Shirley knew everyone, and everyone knew Shirley. It was hard not to. I still have pictures of her on my camera roll with pretty much everyone at camp. We would be the last ones to almost every meal because everyone we passed wanted to stop and talk to her. I don't blame them! I was lucky I got to hangout with her 24/7.

She found joy in the little things and wouldn't forget to tell you how much she loved you. Shirley made the world a better place. We need more people like Shirley who love others endlessly. I feel so blessed to have known her. She made a big impact on my life.

I am so sorry for your loss. She was truly a blessing to everyone with whom she came in contact.

-Dani Roskamp



Dani Roskamp - October 14, 2020 at 03:22 PM



“ Shirley loved many and was willing to freely tell them so, she was very special indeed. Bill and Sherry Thelen

Sherry Thelen - October 13, 2020 at 08:22 PM



“ So sorry for your loss. I always enjoyed talking with her at my old job.

Angela St Croix - October 13, 2020 at 08:06 PM



“ Shirley was a joyful, energetic member of the body of Christ. She was a blessing to our congregation. We, the members of Little Farms Chapel, send to you our prayers in this time of sadness, but we celebrate Shirley's victory in Jesus. Pastor Bob Van Manen

Robert Van Manen - October 16, 2020 at 05:34 PM



“ To the family including Don: May God grant you his healing power and eternal rest to Shirley.

Roger Tharp

Roger - October 17, 2020 at 03:33 PM