



## Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen

February 16, 1933 - October 12, 2023

Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen was born on February 16, 1933 in Dallas, Texas to Arthur and Lillie McWilliams and passed away at age 90 on October 12, 2023 in Spirit Lake, Iowa. She died peacefully at home from natural causes with family by her side. Gwen's husband of 60 years, Darwin Rasmussen, predeceased her on October 15, 2011.

While Gwen was still an infant, a tornado blew off the roof of her family's Dallas home, so they moved out of Dallas to her grandparents' summer cottage on Big Spirit Lake. From that chance beginning, the lake grew to become an integral part of Gwen's life. Her family subsequently lived for several years in Lake Park, Iowa before settling in Graettinger, Iowa, where her father owned and operated a hardware store and her mother was a homemaker. As a child, she loved cooking and baking with her mother and grandmother and going fishing with her grandfather. With her Dutch boy haircut she was very much a tomboy, delighting in cleaning the fish she and her grandfather caught together and riding a boy's bike that her father gave her because she wanted something more rugged.

Gwen attended school in Graettinger, graduating from high school in 1950. She had a very outgoing personality and was involved in so many activities her list of accomplishments filled a quarter page of her yearbook. Among her favorite activities were playing clarinet in the band and playing offense as a forward on the girl's six-on-six basketball team. With her brown hair, brown eyes and dresses made by her mother, a talented seamstress, Gwen

attracted the attention of a wavy-haired farm boy named Darwin Rasmussen. When a friend of Darwin's bet him that he could not get a date with Gwen, Darwin took and won that bet.

Gwen started teachers college after high school and, once she saw how the college guys compared, married her high-school sweetheart, Darwin, in 1951. After marrying, they moved to a farm in the Graettinger area that had no running water. Eighteen-year old Gwen thought it would be like camping compared to living in town. However, Gwen found that she preferred more modern conveniences and, after Darwin returned from a two-year stint in the army, they moved to a farm with running water. In 1963, Gwen realized her dream of moving the family to her grandparents' cottage on Big Spirit Lake, where she and Darwin lived for the rest of their lives. Gwen spent most of her over thirty-year career teaching fourth grade in Estherville. She was very popular with her students and the faculty alike. Her students appreciated her creative lesson plans that incorporated the events of the day to make learning relevant and fun. Students also liked that she listened to them and gave them a voice.

Gwen and Darwin were loving partners, pitching in to help and encourage each other whether they were raising children, supporting Gwen's school teaching and Darwin's farming, or having fun together. Their marriage produced four children, who were very close to their parents, as well as to each other. Gwen was a wonderful, loving mother, who showed her love and creativity in everything she did with and for her children. She transferred her love of the lake to her family, spending summers together fishing, swimming, sailing and water skiing. Everyone respected and enjoyed Gwen's independent and indomitable spirit along with her sassy sense of humor. She was always having fun, whether riding her own motorcycle with Darwin and their friends, enjoying lake activities, or playing, and often winning, pool tournaments and card games.

Gwen is survived by her four children and their families: Diane Rasmussen of Spirit Lake; Mark Rasmussen and his wife, Linda, of Spirit Lake and their

children, Willem and Sophia; Kirt Rasmussen and his wife, Jody Cockrell, of Lufkin, Texas; and Alan Rasmussen of Spirit Lake and his daughter, Shelby and her husband, Dylan, of Jackson, Minnesota and their children, Violet and a son expected in November. We cherish our memories of Gwen and the many ways she contributed to our lives.

P.S. Mom, Thanks to you and Dad for providing us a wonderful life. We really can't think of a way it could have been any better. Congratulations on a life well-lived! Love, Diane, Mark, Kirt and Alan

A celebration of life is being planned for a date to be determined in the summer of 2024. Arrangements are under the direction of the Robinson Funeral Home in Spirit Lake. Online condolences may be left at [www.spiritlakefuneralhome.com](http://www.spiritlakefuneralhome.com)

# Tribute Wall

DH

“ I was also a 4th grade teacher in Estherville and we shared many ideas and techniques about insuring success for every child. My sympathy goes out to her family. Enjoy all the wonderful moments you shared with her.

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**Donna Harms** - November 06, 2023 at 05:57 PM

LC

“ D

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**Linda Conlon** - November 02, 2023 at 07:28 AM

LC

*Our sympathy goes out to all of you & your families. Duane, I, Brian & Brad spend great times with your parents; either at the farm or at the lake. Treasure the memories!*

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**Linda Conlon** - November 02, 2023 at 07:31 AM

SU

“ Oh, Mrs. Rasmussen. Such a wonderful, caring teacher. I once had to speak in front of our class, and I was so nervous, and so upset. She found me later, bent down to my level, and said, “I promise. You’ll never have to do that again in my class.” I went on to become comfortable speaking in front of classes, but I still remember this act of kindness 50 years later. She encouraged me to write, and especially loved one of my poems. She was an amazing teacher who was kind and compassionate. I hope I carry her spirit and compassion in my own classroom. Thank you, Mrs. Rasmussen. I think the world of you. And thank you to her husband and children, for sharing her with her students.

*Susan Donovan Elsenbast*

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**Susan** - November 01, 2023 at 10:44 PM

BB

“ *Bonnie Boetel lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



**Bonnie Boetel** - October 29, 2023 at 02:59 PM

BB

*I had her for a teacher in Estherville in 4 th grade*

**Bonnie Boetel** - October 29, 2023 at 02:59 PM

MP

“ *Gwen was always a wonderful role model for me both growing up and as an adult. She shared her interests in being active and living well, as well as being open to talk about anything I was curious about. I feel lucky to have had her in my life.*

**Marga Powell** - October 27, 2023 at 04:16 PM

SR

“ *Susan Rohan lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



**Susan Rohan** - October 19, 2023 at 12:34 PM

WY

“ *Condolences to the Rasmussen family.*  
*William Yager*



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**William (Bill) Yager** - October 16, 2023 at 08:36 PM

JH

“ *Johnny Huntsinger lit a candle in memory of*  
*Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



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**Johnny Huntsinger** - October 16, 2023 at 07:30 PM

PR

“ *Peggy Rick lit a candle in memory of*  
*Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



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**Peggy Rick** - October 16, 2023 at 07:26 PM

PB

“ *Pete Julie Bergquist lit a candle in memory of*  
*Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



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**Pete Julie Bergquist** - October 16, 2023 at 05:35 PM

MS

“ *Marilyn Strickland lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



Marilyn Strickland - October 15, 2023 at 06:57 PM

DC

“ *David Amd Martha Chozen lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



David amd Martha Chozen - October 14, 2023 at 12:52 PM

LJ

“ *Larry And Mary Ann Jansen lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



Larry and Mary Ann Jansen - October 14, 2023 at 10:40 AM

CC

“ *Cathy Cohrs lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



Cathy Cohrs - October 13, 2023 at 10:37 PM

PB

“ *Paul Bakke lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



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**Paul bakke** - October 13, 2023 at 09:23 PM

DA

“ *Debbie Ahrenstorff lit a candle in memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



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**Debbie Ahrenstorff** - October 13, 2023 at 08:08 PM

MN

“ *Comfort and peace to the Rasmussen family. Prayers.*



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**Mark Neustrom** - October 13, 2023 at 02:51 PM

KW

“ *What a kind and wonderful educator. Blessings to your family †*

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**Kay Wilson** - October 13, 2023 at 02:10 PM

JC

“ *Jeff And Linda Christoffer lit a candle in  
memory of Gwendolyn Sweet Rasmussen*



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**Jeff and Linda Christoffer** - October 13, 2023 at 01:47 PM