

Shirley Lucille (Henrich) McDowell

Story

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Posted: Wednesday, February 16, 2011 12:00 am

Shirley McDowell, 86, beloved wife, mother, sister, aunt and friend died at Hillview Health Care Center in La Crosse in the early morning hours of Sunday, Feb. 13, 2011, only a few months after the death of her devoted husband, Maurice, with her daughter, Maureen, at her side. She had been a resident of Hillview since 2004, lovingly cared for by her family and staff during her declining health and dementia.

Shirley, the youngest of five children, was born on Aug. 9, 1924, on the family farm in Barron County, Wis. She graduated from Rice Lake (Wis.) High School and attended college in La Crosse, majoring in physical education, where she met her future husband, Maurice, the brother of her roommate, Beulah.

Maurice and Shirley were married on Aug. 28, 1945, and started their married life together in a small house on Seventh Street. Two years later, Shirley gave birth to their first child (Butch) in 1947 and was rewarded with a strand of pearls from Maurice. Two daughters (Maureen and Kathleen) rounded out their family, and Maurice and Shirley moved to a larger house on Park Avenue where they lived for over half a century close to their many good friends and neighbors. Shirley was a full-time homemaker and mother, and worked parttime at various office jobs once all her children were in school.

Shirley was a longtime and active member of Wesley United Methodist Church. She taught the Lord's Prayer to dozens of first graders during Sunday School, organized and led lessons during women's circles, and served as secretary for Fireside Forum. She regularly volunteered for church activities and other community organizations (including the American Red Cross, to whom she donated gallons of blood over the years). She was known as a good home-taught cook (having won prizes in her youth for her pie crusts), and shared her talent with many friends and family at Sunday dinners. There was always room for one or two more at the dinner table, and no one went away from the table hungry.

She and Maurice enjoyed playing bridge, square dancing, traveling and spending time together at their "Hatfield Hilton" and at Fun 'N' Sun in Harlingen, Texas. She loved the water and was an avid swimmer and floater. Shirley had a special spot in her heart for animals, especially cats, as a result of her upbringing on the family farm. Shirley had personality and spunk mixed with a strong belief that God put us on this earth to serve Him.

She is survived by her son, Maurice "Butch" and his wife, Shirley, of Llano, Texas; her daughters Maureen (of La Crosse) and Kathleen of Alhambra, Calif.; and her granddaughter, Lindsay of Austin, Texas. She is also survived by nieces and nephews and their children on both the Henrich and McDowell side of the family.

She was predeceased by her parents; her brother, Harvey; and her sisters, Ruth, Gladys, and Marian.

Shirley's family would like to thank the caring staff of Hillview who tended to her so compassionately during her final years.

Pursuant to her wishes, Shirley's body will be cremated and her ashes scattered with those of her partner in life and eternity, Maurice. The family will be having a private memorial service at Hillview on Thursday, Feb. 17, and asks that memories of Shirley be shared with the family in lieu of flowers and memorials.