



Harriet Witherspoon

November 13, 1939 - August 22, 2018

Harriet Witherspoon, 78, of Port Hope passed away peacefully on August 22, 2018 at Courtney Manor in Bad Axe under hospice care. Harriet Anna May Richardson was born November 13, 1939 in Portland, Oregon to Clarence and Hazel Richardson. Named for her benevolent uncle, Harry Tracey, who sponsored her mother and grandmother's emigration from Denmark to Oregon in 1920, Harriet's middle names came from her maternal and paternal grandmothers, respectively. Harriet and her family moved to Port Hope, Michigan in 1947 where she attended Port Hope Community School and met her husband, Richard. Rich and Harriet were united in marriage at St. John's Lutheran Church in Port Hope on June 2, 1956 and shared 60 years together before his passing July 30, 2016. Harriet was a member of St. John's throughout her life.

Harriet was a school bus driver at Port Hope Community School for more than 25 years, a job she thoroughly enjoyed and reveled in doing; attending countless basketball, baseball, softball games, volleyball matches, track and field events and cross country meets, all while cheering on her beloved Bluestars. Hundreds of schoolchildren and young adults, through three generations, knew her simply as "Harriet." She loved children, serving as a preschool aide and babysitting for many little ones over the years.

Harriet was a member of the Port Hope Chamber of Commerce, where she served as president for many years, the organization's first woman to hold the position. She loved and was proud of her "Little Town with the Big Welcome" and for numerous years served as a one-person tourist bureau with her home phone number listed for visitor information in travel publications. She also served as the village assessor for many years, and volunteered in countless other ways for the benefit of the community.

A gifted conversationalist, Harriet enjoyed meeting new people and saw strangers as friends she hadn't yet met. She enjoyed to travel and visited Hawaii, Germany and Alaska and for several consecutive years in the late seventies, early eighties, attended what was then known as "Fan Fair" in Nashville, Tennessee where she met and was photographed with many county music legends including Loretta Lynn, George Jones, Dolly Parton,

Kenny Rogers, Ernest Tubb, Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson and virtually the entire cast of "Hee Haw." She was particularly proud of her 1992 appearance on the nationally televised show "Nashville Now." To paraphrase one of her favorite country songs of the era, Harriet was county, when country wasn't cool. Harriet also enjoyed camping with Rich all over Michigan, and in later years, spending time at the family cabin in St. Helen where she enjoyed hosting friends and family and spent many hours fishing on the pontoon boat.

Shortly after her 61st birthday in 2000, Harriet suffered a debilitating stroke that left her partially paralyzed and unable to speak. After months of therapy and hard work, she was able to walk again with assistance and talk in short sentences, although communication was extremely difficult from then on. Despite these challenges, with Rich's loving care and assistance, Harriet persevered and remained active for the next 14 years, resuming to travel occasionally, take bus trips and spend winters with friends, old and new, in Zephyrhills, Florida. In 2014, after a series of health setbacks, Harriet took up residency at Courtney Manor in Bad Axe where she remained until her death. The family wishes to extend their utmost appreciation and thanks to the staff at Courtney Manor for the genuinely devoted, professional and adoring care for Harriet who, at her position in front of the nurses' station, routinely served as hall monitor, alerting staff to any concerns with the behavior of her fellow residents.

Rich and Harriet raised four boys, and they survive her: Calvin Witherspoon, of Roscommon; Duane (Cathy) Witherspoon of Rochester Hills; Chris (Jodi) Witherspoon of Clarkston; and Gregg (Gretchen) Witherspoon of Saginaw. Harriet was a doting and proud grandmother and great-grandmother who loved to show pictures of her grandchildren to everyone she encountered. Left to cherish her memory are her grandchildren Scott, Corey (Catie), Shawn, Darren, Drew, Bryce, Brenna, Madilyn and great-granddaughter Amelia.

Also surviving is one brother, Ralph (Diana) Richardson of Snover; brother-in-law Robert Witherspoon of Port Hope; and four Sister-in-laws: Jean Weiss of Saginaw; Karen (Richard) Whitehead of Atlanta, Georgia; Diane (Dale) Reinke of Sandusky; and Penny Richardson of Saginaw. Harriet is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by one brother, Alvin Richardson of Saginaw and several brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws.

Funeral Service for Harriet will be Monday, August 27, 2018 at 11 am at St. John Lutheran Church of Port Hope, with Rev. David Dodge officiating. Burial will follow in New River Cemetery. Visitation for Harriet will on Sunday, from 2-8pm at the Ramsey Funeral Home of Harbor Beach. Visitation on Monday will be at the church, beginning at 10 am until time of services at 11 am.

Memorial donations may be made to St. John's Lutheran Church or the American Cancer Society.

Memories can be shared at www.RamseyFH.com

Cemetery

New River Cemetery

Port Austin, MI,

Events

AUG **Visitation** 02:00PM - 08:00PM

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Ramsey Funeral Home, Inc
425 State St, Harbor Beach, MI, US, 48441

AUG **Visitation** 10:00AM - 11:00AM

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St. John Lutheran Church
Port Hope, MI, US, 48468

AUG **Service** 11:00AM

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St. John Lutheran Church
Port Hope, MI, US, 48468

Comments



“ Thoughts and prayers for the entire Richardson/Witherspoon families. It's not the years in her life, but the life in her years. Cherish the memories! Loved the tribute to Harriet in the obituary. Sorry that we cannot be there in person to celebrate her life. I have great memories of Aunt Harriet from when I was a kid. She always had a smirk on her face and took care of everyone. I remember a sleepover and getting to ride her bus route. I remember her even bringing me cookies in college when I was at CMU and she was in Mt. Pleasant bringing kids to a game. Hugs!-Love, Niece Cathy Peterson & family and Sister in-law Penny Richardson.

Cathy Peterson - August 26, 2018 at 01:50 PM



“ 8 files added to the album Harriet



Gregg - August 25, 2018 at 07:19 PM



“ To our friends, the Witherspoon family,
My wife Geri and I arrived in Port Hope in 1992, where I served as pastor of St. John Lutheran church throughout the 1990's. Among the first members to welcome us were Rich and Harriet. Both welcomed us as family members of the community. My fondest memory of Harriet was the many times she would stop her school bus when she saw me walking on the sidewalk going to town and say, "Hop on board pastor, I'll give you a ride." When I got on board, with a twinkle in her eye, she would say, "Don't tell anyone."

Both Rich and Harriet were among the finest friends we ever had. Geri and I will miss her, but look forward to the future reunion all Christians will have when we depart this life. Our Lord gives all Christians this promise: "Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." John 11:25-26

Even in the time of sorrow, Jesus gives us the reason to celebrate when our Christian friends and loved ones depart this life. Harriet has joined Rich in our eternal home, and we will be reunited with them when we depart this life. Harriet has not left us, she has only gone before us into the heavenly mansions of our Lord. May that be your strength in this difficult time.

Our love to all of Harriet's family members,
in Christ Jesus, who died for us and rose again,
assuring us of eternal life.

Rev. Larry and Geri Loree - Pigeon, MI

rev larry k loree sr - August 24, 2018 at 10:27 AM



“ I remember many bus rides with her as she was the driver to almost all of our away games. She would tease us about not stopping at McDonalds after our games. I think that was her idea of making us kids behave. But she was like a Mom to us and we all liked her. Rest In Peace.

Bonnie Keiser - August 23, 2018 at 09:30 PM



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with your family may you all show the strength your Mom showed during her life time she was quite a lady. God bless you all.

LeRoy and Alice Schave - August 23, 2018 at 02:16 PM



“ LeRoy And Alice Schave lit a candle in memory of Harriet Witherspoon



LeRoy and Alice Schave - August 23, 2018 at 02:12 PM



“ Peace be with Harriet & family nicecest obit I ever read. She always knew when we C her at Courtney friends 4 60 + yrs. 🙏

jay howard - August 23, 2018 at 12:50 PM



“ Harriet was born with a mothers heart and then blessed with a grandmothers heart.

Harriet was the epitome of a grandmother and mother. She had four sons that she adored. She had multiple "Grandmothers hearts" for her grandchildren.. they were her life.

I am lucky to have followed in Harriet's footsteps. She also made the BEST tuna salad and would NOT share her secret recipe.

RICH AND HARRIET WERE VERRY SPECIAL TO US WITH MANY WONDERFUL MEMORIES.

Carol Witherspoon, 7914 Portand Ave.

Carol Witherspoon - August 25, 2018 at 11:57 AM



“ Harriet was my bus driver from the time I started school until the time I graduated! She always cared about me and took extra time with me to try and help me when she could. She was an amazing woman and will be missed beyond measure. My thoughts and prayers are with her family.

Angela A Remsing - August 30, 2018 at 08:33 PM