

Shirley Anne (Gildemeister) De Ruyter was born on February 12, 1937, in Pipestone, Minnesota to Richard K. and Viola C. (Huibregtse) Gildemeister. She was raised along with her two brothers in Holland, Minnesota and graduated from Pipestone High School. She attended Winona State Teacher's College for one year and during that time met the love of her life, Sparky De Ruyter at Ann's Cafe in Holland. She and Sparky were married on October 28, 1955, in Holland and lived briefly in Ruthton, Minnesota before moving to Rock Valley, Iowa, where they raised their family and where she lived for over 70 years. Sparky passed away on October 18, 2019, just shy of their 64th wedding anniversary.

Shirley worked for 26 years in banking, most recently at Premier Bank, retiring in 2002. After retiring, she served as a Hospice volunteer for 10 years and was a recipient of the Volunteer of the Year award.

Shirley was very strong in her faith and a prayer warrior. She was an active 70-plus year member at her church, Our Savior's Lutheran. She taught Sunday School, served on the church council, sang in the choir, lectured, was a member of the quilters group and volunteered in other capacities.

Shirley was a talented seamstress and loved to sew. When raising her family, she made many of their clothes, including suits for the guys and always Easter dresses for the girls. She also taught hardanger, knitted, crocheted, did counted cross stitch, quilted and encouraged and helped instill a love of creativity in all her kids. She loved to cook and bake, and no one made cookies that could measure up to hers. She enjoyed working on jigsaw puzzles and was an avid reader, always having a book with her. She loved nature, especially bird watching, star gazing, picnics, spending time outdoors and camping with Sparky and the kids for many years. Gardening was another favorite pastime of hers, and she loved to share the produce she grew with others as well as can the excess. She remained very active throughout her life and walked every day and was proud to attend water aerobics classes twice a week for 23 years, up until July 2025.



Shirley cherished her family and was the very best mother, grandmother and friend. She will be missed dearly. Her family will treasure the memories of time spent with her and always be thankful that God gifted them with her as their mom. Shirley passed away Thursday, March 5, 2026, at her home in Rock Valley, at the age of 89, under the loving care of her family and Sioux Center Health Hospice & Home Care.

Shirley is survived by her five children: Trish (David) Mayer, Sioux Falls, SD, Craig (Julie) De Ruyter, Rock Rapids, IA, Lisa (Kyle) Sitzmann, Slater, IA, Scott (Sarah) De Ruyter, Blyth, ON, and Michelle (Jay) Fischer, Sioux Falls, SD; ten grandchildren: Carrie (Garrick) Moritz, Jaime (Aron) Moir, Sheila (Brett) Peelen, Ashley Fischer, Austin Fischer, Cody De Ruyter, Ryan (Ruth Phaviset) Sitzmann, Megan Sitzmann, Ben (Abby) Sitzmann, and Alex Fischer; ten great-grandchildren: Morgan (Emily) Moritz, Kate (Carter) Plueger, Zach Moir, Koby Peelen, Gavin Knopf, Parker Peelen, Owen Moir, Leif Moritz, Stephon Jones, and Adonis Jones; brother, Dennis (Mary) Gildemeister; in-laws, Ed Poppens, Fran De Ruyter, Linda Wissink, and Carol (Richard) Hill; as well as numerous nieces, nephews and dear friends.

Shirley was preceded in death by her husband, Sparky De Ruyter; parents, Richard and Viola (Huibregtse) Gildemeister; brother, Darrell (Albertha) Gildemeister; sister, Myrna (Duane) Larson; Sparky's parents, Dick and Lena (Kooistra) De Ruyter; and in-laws, Gert (Dick) De Ruyter Van Engen, John (Margaret) De Ruyter, Mary Ann (Pete) De Ruyter Gunnink, Mina (Al Franken) De Ruyter Poppens, Nellie (John) De Ruyter Schoonhoven, Rich (Eleanor) De Ruyter, Gerrit De Ruyter, and Rich Wissink.

In Loving Memory
Shirley Anne De Ruyter
February 12, 1937 ~ March 5, 2026

FUNERAL SERVICE

10:00 AM, Tuesday, March 10, 2026
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Rock Valley, Iowa

OFFICIANT

Pastor Edward Pease

ACCOMPANIST

Julie Anderson

CONGREGATIONAL HYMNS

"Borning Cry"

"On Eagle's Wings"

"My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less"

"What A Friend We Have In Jesus"

PALLBEARERS

Cody De Ruyter ~ Austin Fischer

Brett Peelen ~ Jeff De Ruyter

Curt Van Engen ~ Mike Van Engen

HONORARY PALLBEARERS

Ryan Sitzmann ~ Ben Sitzmann

Alex Fischer ~ Koby Peelen

Parker Peelen ~ Leif Moritz

Doug Van Engen ~ Aron Moir

Garrick Moritz ~ Owen Moir ~ Zach Moir

INTERMENT

Valley View Cemetery
Rock Valley, Iowa

*Shirley's family invites everyone for a time of food and fellowship
in the church fellowship hall following the committal service.*

