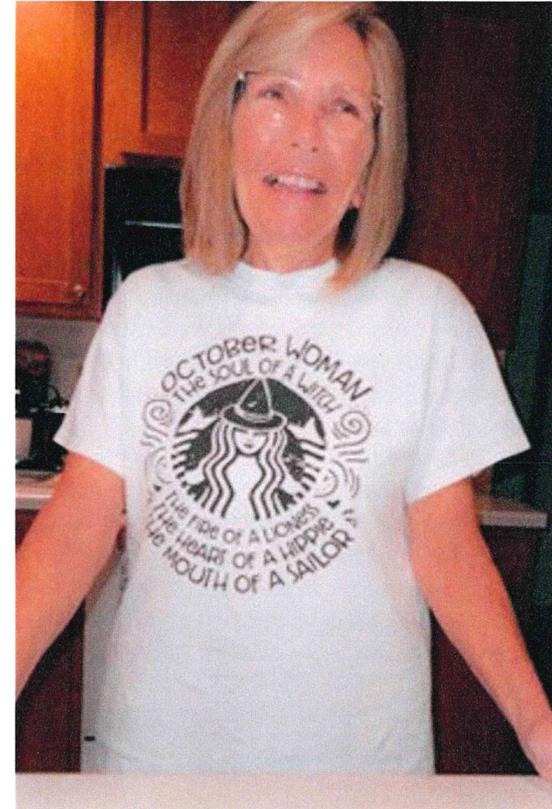


*Celebrating The Life Of
Donna Rae Jans*

I AM A PARENT DEAR LORD
I ASK NOTHING FROM YOU FOR ME.
I PRAY ONLY THAT IN YOUR MERCY
YOU WOULD GRANT MY CHILDREN THEIR NEEDS.
MAY THEIR LIVES BE LONG AND HEALTHY.
MAY THEY ACHIEVE ALL THEIR DREAMS.
MAY THEY ALWAYS LIVE IN A WORLD THAT IS FREE.
MAY THEY BE WHO THEY WERE BORN TO BE.
AND MAY THEY KNOW TO THEIR LAST DAYS
THAT THEY WERE DEEPLY LOVED BY ME.



*October 6, 1954
January 2, 2026*



Known as Donna Rae to her childhood friends and family, she was born October 6, 1954, in Sheldon, Iowa, to James and Darlene Houtsma. She attended Sheldon High School, graduating with the class of 1973.

Donna earned a B.A. in Elementary Education from Westmar College in Le Mars, Iowa, in 1977. While at Westmar College, a long-time friend introduced her to a tall, lanky young man with a full head of hair named Jerry Jans. The two married soon after graduating from college. In 2025, Donna and Jerry celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary.

Donna and Jerry moved around Iowa throughout the early years of their marriage. They began in Melvin before relocating to Klemme. While living in Klemme, they had their first child, Cody. Donna gave birth to Cody on her 25th birthday, October 6, 1979, dubbing him the best birthday present she had ever received. It became an annual tradition for Donna and Cody to both skip school and celebrate their special day together.

When the family moved to Adair in 1983, one of Cody's favorite memories is driving around town with his mom, their pet dachshund on his lap, listening to Huey Lewis and the News.

The family resettled next in Hawarden, Iowa, in 1985 and welcomed Caitlin on January 6, 1987. Donna's love of music rubbed off on her daughter, as she would play the piano and Caitlin would sing along. *Blowin' in the Wind* by Bob Dylan and *(Everything I Do) I Do it For You* by Bryan Adams were two of their favorite songs.

Donna loved to bake and she always had treats ready on her kitchen counter to share. Caitlin's friends would enjoy a Rice Krispie bar and a chat with Mom before Caitlin even knew they had stopped by to visit.

The family of four all celebrated birthdays on the 6th day of their birth month, with Donna and Cody on October 6, Caitlin on January 6, and Jerry on March 6.

Donna dedicated her professional life to teaching. She was meticulously organized and spent hours creating teaching plans. Throughout her career she made meaningful connections with her colleagues, and she kept those relationships dear to her heart until the very end. She primarily taught kindergarten and first grade. She taught in several school districts including twenty-two years at West Sioux Schools in Hawarden and Ireton, Iowa.

Donna adored her grandchildren, Rowan and Ryker. They called her "Nanny," and she enjoyed spending every minute she could with them. She considered them her "angels." Trips to the library were regular events with her angels, and she always had a stash of their favorite cheese popcorn to share with them.

Donna loved to sit in the sun, read a good novel, and sip on a Diet Coke. She loved a good conversation with beloved friends and family. She also loved the Beatles and Linda Ronstadt, and would sing along with all of their songs.

She passed away peacefully on January 2, 2026, at Friendly Horizons in Sioux Center, Iowa, after battling primary progressive aphasia for several years.

Donna is survived by her son, Cody Jans and his wife Neena Hayreh; daughter, Caitlin Jans; and grandchildren, Rowan Hoogland and Ryker Hoogland. She is also survived by her brother, James Houtsma, Jr., and his wife Sue Houtsma.

Donna was preceded in death by her parents, James and Darlene Houtsma, and her husband, Jerry Jans.

Remembering The Life Of Donna Rae Jans

October 6, 1954 ~ January 2, 2026

GATHERING OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, January 24, 2026

Porter Funeral Home

Hawarden, Iowa

OFFICIANT

Pastor Carolyn Salberg

MUSIC

"Amazing Grace"