

Murlene Kay Gruis was born on February 2, 1945, in St. James, Minnesota, the daughter of Harlan and Doris (Haseman) Peterson. She grew up in St. James, graduated from St. James High School in 1963, and attended Mankato State College. On June 26, 1964, Murlene married her high school sweetheart, Dave Gruis. They lived in St. James until 1974, when they moved to Willmar. She was employed as a bookkeeper at CD&T Auto Parts store, then worked at Crown Floral for several years prior to becoming a Guardian Ad Litem; but her favorite role was as a wife, mom, and especially “Grammie”. She was recently promoted to the status of “Great-Grammie”, a title she absolutely relished.

Murlene and Dave enjoyed traveling together throughout the United States and Europe. She was a true superfan of her children’s and grandchildren’s activities, from hockey to band to dance and twirling. She also enjoyed her rose garden and knitting beautiful sweaters for those she loved. Murlene cherished her time with the Wednesday morning “Coffee Ladies” for 45 years and was active in several book clubs over the years. She loved those around her with fierce loyalty and brought so much life to any conversation. She and Dave loved creating once-in-a-lifetime experiences for family, with “Camp Grammie and Bonka” being a favorite. Murlene’s love for dogs was evident to every person (and dog!) who knew her. Her current pack of two black labs and a miniature dachshund will miss her dearly.

Murlene passed away Sunday, January 18, at CentraCare Rice Memorial Hospital at the age of 80.

She is survived by her loving husband of over 60 years, Dave; her four children, Kyle (and Anne) Gruis of Baudette, Kristin (and Mike) Jacobsen of Willmar, Kelly (and Mary) Gruis of Atwater and Katie (and Tim) Wiens of Willmar; four grandchildren, Ali (and Andrew) Jacobsen, Ben Jacobsen, Sam Gruis, and Eliot Wiens; one great granddaughter, Lowen Jacobsen; her mother, Doris Sawatzky of St. James; and one brother, Greg (and Mary) Peterson of Hayfield.

She was preceded in death by her father, Harlan, and by Frank Sawatzky, husband of Doris.

Celebrating the Life of



Murlene K. Gruis

1945 — 2026

In Loving Memory Of

Murlene Kay Gruis

God saw Murlene was getting tired

And a cure was not to be,

So He put His arms around her

And whispered, "Come with Me."

With tearful eyes we watched her suffer

And saw her fade away,

Although we loved Murlene dearly

We could not make her stay.

A golden heart stopped beating

Hard working hands to rest,

God broke our hearts to prove to us

He only takes the best.

February 2, 1945

St. James, Minnesota

January 18, 2026

Willmar, Minnesota

Celebration of Life Service

Sunday, February 1, 2026 - 2:00 p.m.

Peterson Brothers Funeral Home

Willmar, Minnesota

Welcome

Prayer

Opening Song

Remembrances

Scripture Readings

Message

Song

Prayer

Closing Song