

Bernita Ilene Holdeman
Mar. 24, 1939 - Sept. 19, 2019

Ilene Holdeman, 80, of Montezuma and formerly of West Branch, passed away Thursday, Sept. 19, at the Mahaska Health Hospice Serenity House in Oskaloosa.

Bernita Ilene Holdeman, the youngest of nine children born to Henry and Agnes (Gabbert) Harris, was born March 24, 1939.

Ilene attended school in Norway and West Branch until a farming accident took the life of her father. The family then moved to Mount Vernon. It was there that she graduated high school in 1957.

Shortly after graduating, June 15, 1957, Ilene married her high school sweetheart, Gary Eugene Holdeman. They made their home in rural West Branch where they raised their five children.

Ilene enjoyed gardening and preserving its bounty for her family. Gary and Ilene farmed for four years before they got into the sheep shearing business. When her children were out of the home, Ilene started to accompany Gary to the many states where they sheared sheep. After a time, they started a sharpening blade business with the shearing. They traveled to the east coast serving Hancock Fabric Stores and its customers, sharpening countless scissors and shears. They purchased a motor home in 2000, making their time on the road more comfortable. Ilene and Gary worked together for over 60 years in the sheep shearing and sharpening business.

In 2010 they moved to the Montezuma area. Ilene enjoyed sharing stories of their adventures across the United States and of the many kind and caring people they met along the way. She was proud of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren; she enjoyed having them visit.

Ilene's family includes her husband, Gary, of over 62 years; her children and their spouses: Dean Holdeman of Chariton, Roger (& Lynn) Holdeman, Lori (& Dave) Avel of Royal, Mike Holdeman of Reasnor, and Brian (& Lynn) Holdeman of Ankeny; many grandchildren and great-grandchildren; a brother, Buel "Sonny" Harris of Cedar Rapids; and a brother-in-law, Bill Zaruba of Cedar Rapids.

In addition to her parents, Ilene was preceded in death by her siblings: Dale, Bueta, Brownie, Max, Liz, Wanda, and Jenny.

A Celebration of Life gathering was held Tuesday, Sept. 24 at the New Sharon United Methodist Church.

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