

## Bev Rens, 64

Bev Rens, age 64, of Brooklyn, died peacefully on Monday May 30, 2011 at Grinnell Regional Medical Center from ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). Bev's family plans a celebration of life open house. As soon as details are finalized they will be made available on the Smith Funeral Home Web site ([www.smithfh.com](http://www.smithfh.com)) or via their automated phone line at 641-236-4950.



Bev Rens née Lilleg was born on February 3, 1947 at St. Francis Hospital in Waterloo, Iowa to Hazel and Joseph Lilleg. She grew up in Waterloo and graduated from Columbus High School in 1965. Growing up, her ambition was always to be a nurse, and she followed that dream graduating from The University of Iowa College of Nursing in 1970. Soon after, Bev married Jay Rens and the two moved to a farm near Hartwick, Iowa and later into her beloved home in Brooklyn where Bev lived until March of 2011 when her battle with ALS caused her to move to St. Francis Manor in Grinnell. Though Bev and Jay would later divorce, they had two daughters together; Andrea and Sarah. While in the Brooklyn area, Bev worked as a nurse at a variety of places. She started out as a floor nurse at Grinnell Hospital, but worked as a school nurse for the Belle Plaine and HLV schools while her daughters were young. Her longest tenure was with Surgical Associates in Grinnell, but she left there in 1992 to be a floor nurse at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City. Fueling her passion for both nursing and workers' rights, she left UIHC in 2000 to pursue a short career with the SEIU nurses union. She eventually was called back to doing what she loved best - being a nurse. She worked briefly for Covenant Medical Center in Waterloo, and then wrapped up her full-time nursing career at the Brooklyn Medical Clinic before her retirement in 2009. Not one to sit at home, she continued to work part-time for the Brooklyn Medical Clinic and for Maxim Healthcare, giving flu shots to thousands across Iowa.

As active as she was in her professional life, Bev was equally active in her community life. She loved living in Brooklyn and saw it as her duty to give back to the community. She was on the BGM School Board for 6 years, serving 3 years as president and on the Citizens Scholarship Foundation board for 9 years. She served on the Brooklyn Historical Society Board for over 10 years and on the Community Festival Board for over 10 years. She was a member of Kiwanis for over 10 years, holding various positions, as well as a member of South Side Circle for over 10 years. Additionally, she served on the Brooklyn City Zoning Commission and the Poweshiek County Board of Health. Last but not least, she loved being a Democrat and was a member of the Poweshiek County Democrats for over 20 years, serving as Co-Chair for 6 years and involved in Central Committee for over 10 years. Bev showed her love for community and politics in both word and deed.

In her personal life, Bev had a number of passions. First and foremost she loved to spend time with her family and friends. She adored her children and grandchildren and took advantage of every opportunity to be with them. She was also a true friend to many, and would never say no to a friend (or stranger) in need. Another great passion of hers was gardening, and if one was to look for her on a summer day, chances are they knew where to find her...in her back yard weeding her garden. Second to gardening, she loved to knit. Many friends and family in Brooklyn and across the country have a hand knit blanket from Bev as she gave them out as her standard gift for new babies, graduations and weddings. She also loved crossword puzzles, reading, listening to Bob Dylan, playing Jeopardy and watching her "stories" on TV.

Bev will be deeply missed by all who knew her, but none more than her family. She is survived by her two daughters, Andrea (John) Wasson of Cedar Rapids and Sarah (Jay) Lettow of Des Moines; grandchildren Morgan and Lucy; siblings Barb Lellig, Toni (George) Selden, Mike (Lori) Lilleg, Trish (Joe) Still and Mary (Mark) Holschlag. She was preceded in death by her parents, Hazel and Joseph Lilleg.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Citizen's Scholarship Fund of BGM (PO Box 469, Brooklyn, IA 52211) or the ALS Association Iowa Chapter (6165 NW 86th Street, Suite 205 - Johnston, IA 50131).

Exactly one week before her passing, while visiting with her daughter, Bev composed the following to share. Though it did not make it into publication before her death, her family echoes her sentiments and wanted to share her last words to her community.

*To the kind people of Brooklyn and surrounding communities - Words cannot express the gratitude and blessings I feel for the generous benefit thrown in my honor. It was overwhelmingly heartwarming to see so many people out to support me in my fight against ALS. It goes to show what a small community can do when they come together to help someone in need.*

*Additionally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their continued support since my diagnosis in December of 2010. With your help I was able to stay in my beloved home for far longer than I would have been able to otherwise.*

*Thank you so much for your thoughts, prayers, support and love.*

PCCR 6/1-11



Bev Rens died Monday May 30, 2011, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center from ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease). A celebration of life visitation is planned for Saturday, June 11, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Michael J. Manatt Community Center in Brooklyn.

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Bev Lilleg Rens was born Feb. 3, 1947, at St. Francis Hospital in Waterloo to Hazel and Joseph Lilleg. She grew up in Waterloo and graduated from Columbus High School in 1965, then from The University of Iowa College of Nursing in 1970. She was united in marriage with Jay Rens and the two moved to a farm near Hartwick and later to Brooklyn where Bev lived until March of 2011 when her battle with ALS caused her to move to St. Francis Manor in Grinnell. Though Bev and Jay later divorced, they had two daughters together, Andrea and Sarah.

During her career in the medical profession, Bev worked as a floor nurse at Grinnell hospital, as a school nurse for the Belle Plaine and HLV schools, with Surgical Associates in Grinnell, and as a floor nurse at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City. She also worked briefly with the SEIU nurses union and for Covenant Medical Center in Waterloo before wrapping up her full-time nursing career at the Brooklyn Medical Clinic before her retirement in 2009. In her retirement, she continued to work part-time for the Brooklyn Medical Clinic and for Maxim Healthcare, giving flu shots to thousands across Iowa.

She was on the BGM school board six years, serving three years as president and on the Citizens Scholarship Foundation board for nine years. She served on the Brooklyn Historical Society Board, the Community Festival Board, as a member of Kiwanis and as a member of South Side Circle each for over ten years. She also served on the Brooklyn City Zoning Commission and the Poweshiek County Board of Health, and was a member of the Poweshiek County Democrats for over 20 years, serving as co-chair for six years and involved in Central Committee for over ten years.

She was passionate about friends and especially family, and loved gardening and knitting. She also enjoyed crossword puzzles, reading, listening to Bob Dylan, playing Jeopardy and watching her "stories" on TV.

She is survived by her two daughters, Andrea Wasson of Cedar Rapids and Sarah Lettow of Des Moines; two grandchildren; and her siblings Barb Lellig, Toni Selden, Mike Lilleg, Trish Still and Mary Holschlag. She was preceded in death by her parents.