

## Cornelia De Jong, 81, Tracy

Cornelia Marie Nikkel was born on Feb. 16, 1926, in her parents' farm house in Jasper County, north of Sully. She was the youngest of three children who were born to Willem Henry and Carrie Marie Van Zante Nikkel. Marie attended the **C. De Jong**



Sully Christian Grade School, then due to a family move, transferred to Tracy Consolidated to begin high school. Marie graduated from Pella Christian High School in 1946. She then attended the Blackwood Brothers School of Music in Shenandoah, graduating with an "A" average. She later earned her teaching degree from Central College in Pella. Marie devoted her life to teaching children in both public and private school settings, when not being a caregiver for her family. She began her teaching career in the Hardscrapple Country School located southeast of Pella before leaving the profession to care for her parents.

After her father's death in 1953, she helped her brother Delis Nikkel on the farm until after her mother passed on. Marie then returned to her teaching, spending 11 years teaching first grade at the Oskaloosa Christian Grade School followed by 17 years with the kindergarten, first and second grades at the Peoria Christian Grade School. Marie spent most of her adult life in the rural Bussey and Tracy area before marrying Nicholas P. De Jong on July 7, 1977.

Following their marriage, Marie and Nick lived in the Knoxville, Iowa area. Following Nick's death in 1996, she returned to Tracy, sharing a home with her brother, De. Marie was an avid reader, leaving a rich legacy in the countless children she taught that skill. She was an active, faithful member of the Tracy Christian Reformed Church in Tracy where she taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School until being diagnosed with the brain tumor that claimed her

life. She took great pleasure in her work with the Martha Circle and her volunteer hours at the Tracy General Store in Tracy. Marie was called home on Saturday morning, Dec. 1, 2007, at the age of 81 years, 9 months and 15 days while residing at the Northern Mahaska Nursing and Rehab Center in Oskaloosa following surgery for a glioblastoma tumor in September 2007. Left to carry on the family heritage are her step-children and their families: Shirley De Jong of Knoxville, Nancy and Wilbur Kelderman of Tracy, Larry and Mardell De Jong of Knoxville, Terry and Leona De Jong of Knoxville; three sisters-in-law: Anna Pauline Nikkel of Tracy, Dorothy (De Jong) Bokhoven of Pella and Sadie (De Jong) Albright of Sully; a brother-in-law, Ernest De Jong of Pella; and her three nieces (who were like daughters to her) and their families: Connie L. and Ralph Stout of Tracy, Paulette A. and Marty Williams of Tracy and L. Jayne and Steve Rozenboom of Bussey.

Awaiting her in heaven were her husband, Nick De Jong; her parents: Willem and Carrie Nikkel; her brothers: Albert Henry (Nick) Nikkel and Delis Arthur (De) Nikkel; and two great-nephews: Matthew Rozenboom and Bryon Stout. Marie loved music, especially enjoying participation in various cantatas and gatherings around the piano with the family for sing-a-longs of favorite hymns and southern gospel music.

For those desiring, memorials may be given for Mahaska County Hospice or Peoria Christian Grade School.

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