



Kathy Hankel

August 8, 1942 - October 6, 2016

Kathy Hankel

Jefferson, Iowa

Date of Death: October 6, 2016

A Memorial Gathering for Kathy Hankel, 74, of Jefferson will be Saturday, October 22, 2016 at her home, 503 Hickory Lane in Jefferson, Iowa from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm with a Memorial Service at 1:30 pm. Memorials are suggested to Iowa Public Television.

“Kathy Hankel the Fabulous”

a column by colleen O’Brien

Obituary for Kathy Hankel

Jefferson, Iowa

Date of Birth: August 8, 1942

Date of Death: October 6, 2016

“Kathy Hankel the Fabulous, 74, of Jefferson, has departed for her next journey accompanied by husband Patrick Hankel, son Christopher, brothers Bob and Bruce Jeffries, parents Edgar and Frieda (Grunwald) Jeffries.

“Kathy is survived by her daughters: Sarah (Jason) Hankel-Hoffman of Des Moines, IA, Tierney (Chris) Millhollin of Des Moines, IA; her sons: Tyler (Jill) Hankel of Granger, IA, Lou (Ann) Hankel of Pleasant Hill, IA; 3 grandchildren: Christopher, Faith, and Ryan; sister: Fay (John) Tracy of Boulder, CO; other relatives; and many friends.

“There will be a memorial gathering on Saturday, Oct. 22, 1 to 5 p.m., at Mom’s home, 503 Hickory Lane. Thank you with all our hearts for your food, cards, calls, flowers, memorials and support. We hope to celebrate Mom’s life with you at the memorial.”

the family of Kathy Hankel

Kathy Hankel lived a good and purposeful life; it just wasn’t long enough for those of us

left behind.

Wherever she is right now, we believe and hope that this very creative and funny female is no longer struggling to breathe but is dancing thru a field of wildflowers, pausing to capture them on film, for she was a superb photographer, both for art's sake and for families'.

She photographed family portraits – birthdays, parties, graduations, generational gatherings -- of most of the local population. If you see family groups on walls in friends' homes, you know who did them – Hankel style shining through all the different families. For years she was the choice of the county's high schoolers for their senior pics – each portrait unique to the kid.

I worked with her a few summers as her schlepper for weddings throughout the county. She's the only person I'd ever met who could line up a cast of thousands on an alter and get them all to look at her lens and smile. She had a power about her that was subtle; the crazier the wedding party, the quieter she became: soon, a large group of dressed-up hyper people was docile and agreeable under her soft-voiced guidance – where to stand, how to put their feet, what to do with their hands. She could have been a Hollywood director.

I knew Kathy a short time – about 15 years. I was the native who left and she was the newcomer who came to town and made Jefferson a better place because of her creativity, goodwill and pure joy of life. I believe she knew the folks of the entire county because wherever we went, everyone — teenager to old person -- stopped her to say hello. She belonged to a dozen organizations and was active in them. She played bridge, she cooked fancy things for dinner club groups, she actively promoted art in Jefferson and was instrumental in starting a poetry group in Greene County. In 2014 she was honored as volunteer of the year; it could well have been of a decade or two.

Her art is startling. She could make an art doll out of a sewing machine drawer or an open book. She sculpted in clay and made weird-faced characters that she couldn't give up because she fell in love with them; they became part of her decor, sitting around her house peering out with their mischievous faces. She also carved driftwood and made dolls out of paper bags preserved in bees wax. She painted large, flat art that hangs in her home and her garage. She collected the art of others, pleased to promote art she treasured from budding artists of all mediums from around the state.

Her sense of hilarity surfaced on any occasion. One time, a few of us planned to meet in Cooper for a homemade pie and ice cream event. Most of us were there, waiting for Diane Foster, who was bicycling from Jefferson. When she arrived, her calf gashed and bleeding from a fall off her bike, Kathy insisted on driving her to the hospital. While she waited for Diane to be fixed, Kathy casually appropriated a few purple surgical gloves, stuffing them in her bra.

When Kathy and Diane came back for the pie fest, Kathy took the gloves slowly out of her

blouse, like she was a magician, and then started blowing them up. They bobbed around the picnic table, and quickly we all were blowing up surgical gloves for the pure fun of it. The next day Kathy looped the purple fingers of balloons on a long heavy string and hung them on the railing at the library with the notice -- "Art Attack." The "attack" was moved from there to private front porches, where homeowners moved it along to unsuspecting friends. This was pure Kathy Hankel whimsy that involved everyone who came close to it. Her endlessly creative ways extended to her poetry, some of the funniest stanzas we ever heard in our group. She always said she wasn't much of a poet because she just couldn't be serious. We knew she was a great poet because she took away our seriousness and made us smile.

I will leave you with this poem of hers that takes her brain cells to task in defense of an exhausted muse; it reveals to a world too mundane for the likes of a wild and creative mind like hers just how cool she was:

Frustration by Kathy Hankel

You're stuck deep in my head you naughty grey gnomes.
Stand up and advance. Evolve into poems!

You're no use to me living inside my poor brain
You stubborn half-thoughts - you drive me insane.

Get up and get out and do it right now!
My muse is exhausted and doesn't know how.

I'm thinking you're useless, trite and mundane.
Da duh da da duh -- a slow movin' train.

Thanks, Kathy.

Comments



“ Four years. I keep trying to tell myself it's been three.

sarah Hankel-Hoffman - October 03, 2020 at 06:47 AM



“ To Kathy's children, I hope you'll see our note to you. We were deeply saddened to receive news from another Jefferson friend that your mom had passed. She was the dearest and best friend I had during the many years that we lived across the street from each other. We thoroughly enjoyed our bridge club...Marcia O and I just talked about those fun days. Perhaps in the weeks, months and years ahead when you see qualities and actions in your own lives that surprise you, you'll smile and think, "I wonder....yes, maybe that's part of Mom living in me." Love and prayers to you! Linda Muth

Linda Muth - November 13, 2016 at 10:52 AM



“ I first met Kathy when we worked at the Bee and Herald back in the 80's. What a gracious, spirited lady who always shared a laugh with everyone she met. I remember the first time she invited me to her home...I fell in love with her Native American sculptures. It didn't take long to realize Kathy had an innate talent to walk through the timber, find seemingly dead wood and bring new life to it . What a wonderful talent, and a warm person. She will be missed. To her family, I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers and your Mom in my memory. Take care of one another. Barbara Baughh

Barbara Baughh - October 13, 2016 at 11:40 PM



“ I remember her taking my senior pictures how caring and sweet she was

Wendy Adamson - October 12, 2016 at 09:07 PM



“ Sorry I didn't make it to the visitation. Your mom always had a smile on her face. She did our confirmation pictures for years at the Methodist Church here in Jefferson. She was always so obliging to do them whenever it worked for us. I will miss seeing her around town.

Deb Blackburn - October 11, 2016 at 09:36 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Kathy Hankel.



October 10, 2016 at 11:48 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Kathy Hankel.



October 10, 2016 at 11:16 AM



“ What a pleasure it was in recent years during my visits home to come to know this warm creative witty woman who celebrated poetry with many of my oldest and best friends. I loved how she welcomed me and reached out to me when my mother passed away.....I hope there are others behind her who will continue to keep our small sweet town so human and interesting. May she rest in peace and kindest regards to her children and family. Rebecca Coyne White

Rebecca White - October 10, 2016 at 10:44 AM



“ Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of Kathy Hankel.



October 10, 2016 at 10:11 AM



“ I knew Kathy and her family for many years working while working for Wells Fargo. She did my husband and my pictures after we got married. She was a special person and will be missed by many! Thinking of you at this sad time!

Dennis & Terry Murphy

Dennis & Terry Murphy - October 10, 2016 at 08:15 AM



“ Kathy always had a smile and kind word when I saw her. She took all my children's pictures from the time they were born and our family pictures until she retired. She was like family and held a special place in our hearts. She will always be remembered by all the pictures on our wall. My kids always called her "Kathy Catchlight". She will be missed. Kathy did a lot for our community that still lives on!

Annie Ostendorf

Annie Ostendorf - October 09, 2016 at 03:42 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Kathy Hankel.



October 09, 2016 at 09:57 AM



“ Sarah, Tierney & family:
So very sorry for the loss of your beloved mother. She was indeed fabulous! It was a pleasure to know her.
Much love,
Jude

Jude - October 08, 2016 at 05:39 PM



“ Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Kathy Hankel.



October 08, 2016 at 11:42 AM



“ Kathy was so supportive and such an advocate for art, poetry and all things of beauty and will be missed greatly. She was always ready with a friendly exchange whenever I ran into her while visiting my hometown, she was also an amazing artist. I exhibited with her several times in Jefferson during Bell Tower days and also felt honored to be invited to share in a poetry reading one autumn. Rest In Peace Kathy,

Cheryl Stidwell Parker - October 08, 2016 at 10:52 AM



“ I really liked Kathy. She took several pictures of our families over the past years and she did an excellent job. We are sorry for your loss.

Elma Schrader - October 08, 2016 at 07:46 AM



“ A while ago at a meeting of the poetry women in her livingroom, Kathy recounted details of the special hue she thought the sky typically has every year around 4 in the afternoon when April turns to May. Noting those particulars of color and light helped make her the photographer she was.

She was equally quick to see the best aspects of the people she met, both in photographing them and getting to know them as friends. Charming and witty, serious or funny, she was always gentle.

We will miss her very much.

Jane A.

Jane Alexander - October 07, 2016 at 09:27 PM



“ My heart aches with this loss, and memories of Kathy flood my thoughts as I recall even our earliest times together in both the coven and the GC Arts Council. I realize that through my memories Kathy will forever be a part of me. Her love and friendship were the materials she offered that inspired, and that made each interaction a certified heart treasure.

The glow in her face, the wisdom of her words, and the gentleness in her voice, gave me a sense that she was always surrounded by angels. I believe we will find she left some of that angel dust for us, and that we will sense it as we remember.

I am forever thankful our lives intersected for a while.

Blessings,

Lou Blanchfield

Sylvia Lou Blanchfield - October 07, 2016 at 05:52 PM



“ When my friend Kathy Hankel died, a big hole opened in my heart. Sad days when our beloveds die. For some time I'll live w/ a loneliness, a kind of hollowness, a what do I do now that Kathy's gone feeling? Memories are the only way out; without them we're nothing. Kathy contributed to so many of mine -- she was just downright funny; she had an original, delightful, off-the-wall take on just about everything. In casual conversation in her poetry, in her art, she always made me laff. That is a huge legacy. We have a lot to be grateful for that she lived, that she was a part of our lives, that she left so much poetry and art behind for us to read, look at and be amused by. Her take on life delighted us all, and we are lucky to have been in that life with her for a while.

Colleen O'Brien

Colleen O'Brien - October 07, 2016 at 09:38 AM



“ I'm sorry Colleen. She left holes in quite a few hearts, but nothing like yours. Thank you for finding Mom and us.

Sarah Hankel-Hoffman - October 09, 2016 at 01:27 AM