



## Mary Coon

August 6, 2013

Memorial services for Mary Coon, 87, of Jefferson, will be held 11:00am Saturday, August 10, 2013 at First United Methodist Church in Jefferson. Lunch, visitation and fellowship will immediately follow in the church fellowship hall. Inurnment will take place privately at the Jefferson Cemetery.

Surviving are her husband Don Coon; 4 daughters: Denise (Steven) Harberts, Marianne (Roger) Carlson, Teresa (James) Shahan, Gina (Tom) Harrington, all of Jefferson, IA; 13 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren; and a brother Fr. Clark Trafton (Lewis Kerman) of Palms Springs, CA.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to First United Methodist Church in Jefferson.

Services were arranged by Slininger-Rossow Funeral Home 515-386-2171

Mary Louise Trafton Coon, daughter of Rex and Myrtle Trafton, was born December 19, 1925 in Gilmore City, Iowa, but lived most of her childhood in Marathon, Iowa. She had one brother Clark Trafton. Mary Lou, as she was called then, was a tomboy who grew up

in the great outdoors. There was fishing, hunting, gardening, and swimming at the lake. She was an avid reader and brilliant scholar who was valedictorian of her senior class. She enrolled at Iowa State as a chemistry major and was commended by the college president for her academic achievements.

The following is the “rest of the story” of Mary’s life. It was love at first sight, in 1944, when Mary Louise Trafton (daughter of Rex and Myrtle Trafton) and Donald William Coon (son of Bill and Winnie Coon) laid eyes on each other at the Coon farmstead in Washington Township, Greene County, Iowa. Don was a typical farm boy and Mary was an Iowa State coed majoring in chemistry. Three fun Greene County coeds (Eleanor Coon, Martha May and Mary Ella Young) lived across the hall from Mary at the Farmhouse Fraternity. Eleanor, Don’s younger sister, invited Mary home to the farm for a weekend visit. When meeting Don for the first time, this chemistry major discovered the “Big Bang Theory!” One month later this young couple was engaged and they married the following summer on August 5, 1945 in Mary’s hometown of Marathon, Iowa.

The newlyweds settled into farming in Grant Township on a rise overlooking the Raccoon River valley. The place was barren. They dug a foundation and moved in an old farmhouse from down the road, built a barn with the help of Don’s parents, and started planting trees. Times were tough but they were young and strong. Both knew the meaning of hard work. Mary may have been raised in town, but she rolled up her shirt sleeves and dug right in, learning every skill a farmwife needed to know. She milked cows, butchered chickens, gathered eggs, planted a big garden, canned, drove a tractor, chased hogs, bottled lambs, pulled weeds, ran clothes through the wringer washer and hung them up to dry.

Don kept busy with field work and livestock (hogs, cattle, sheep and chickens). He also hauled water from “the other barn” down the road because there was no well at the home place. To supplement their income Don worked as a carpenter with his father, Bill Coon. They worked on corncribs, barns, houses and other buildings in the Greene County area.

Don and Mary were a twosome for only a short time before they were expecting a baby. As the due date drew near, Don was doing spring field work down below the house. He told Mary to pin a towel to the clothesline as a signal to him that it was time to go to the hospital. Little Denise Louise was born at the Greene County Hospital on May 19, 1946. Mary spent 10 days at the hospital and the bill was only \$47.50. What a deal! Daughter, sweet, Marianne came along on November 12, 1948. They were proud parents of their

two little girls. Sadly, in the next few years, two more babies, William Rex and Rebecca Lynn, died shortly after birth at the hospital. Don and Mary doubted they would have any more children, but several years later they were overjoyed to welcome Teresa Eleanor on January 19, 1957, and Gina Marie on September 13, 1958.

Mary also welcomed the happy task of sewing dresses and frocks for the four girls.

Family life was an important part of the Coon family. Meals were a time of prayer, good food, and lots of fun. Mary was a fabulous cook who knew her way around the kitchen. Mary is still famous amongst corn shellers and hay balers for her roast beef dinners, homemade bread and pies, and bottomless glasses of iced tea. Family favorites were fried chicken, fried mush, fried zucchini and eggplant, fried potatoes, crispy "side meat" (uncured bacon), meatloaf, creamed peas, buttered carrots and frequently mashed potatoes and gravy. Evenings were spent together over a bowl of popcorn or Schwan's ice cream while the black and white television played "I Love Lucy," and "The Honeymooners."

Sunday meant putting a roast in the oven, going to church, and coming home to a melt-in-your-mouth dinner with grandparents and everyone. Pleasant Hill Church, in Grant Township, where Don attended church as a child, holds a special place in Don and Mary's hearts. They still gather there for a "homecoming" service every Memorial weekend.

This family worked hard, but made time for fun and friends. Many good times were had with best friends Dar and Lila Johnston, Walt and Nadine Anderson and their families. Squirrel Hollow was the site of many wiener roasts and picnics. Camping with the Andersons and Johnstons was the high point of every summer vacation. Don always made a trip to the Home State Bank to get traveler's checks for the trip. The families traveled the United States together, sleeping in tents and cooking over camp stoves. There were no seatbelts or restraints and gas was cheap. Full service gas stations were the norm with the familiar "ding-ding" when you pulled up to the pump. Pop came in a glass bottle and road maps were free. At each campsite the kids played Frisbee, whittled sticks, played in the fire and fought over who got to chop firewood. These are fond memories for the whole "gang" as Lila used to say. Winter time was fun, too. There was ice skating on the Raccoon River and Don and Mary were very handy on skates. They could do figure eights and skate arm in arm. The kids had skates and tried to keep up with Mom and Dad. Crack-the-whip was always fun but usually ended with someone in tears.

Sledding down the hill behind the house was a major highlight of the winter. Once again, friends and relatives built a bonfire and risked life and limb on sleds, toboggans, saucers

and skis. Don built up the snow track with his old H tractor and made ramps and bumps for their sledding pleasure. Old home movies attest to the fact that this was no sport for the timid.

Chore time was a fun time for the girls to go with Don. They put on their chore coats and rode with the family dog in the back of the pickup truck, to throw hay and grain to the livestock every morning and night. Every day was a new adventure in watching gates, sorting hogs, moving cattle, chasing the one that got away, seeing a new birth, or hauling a dead critter to the road for the rendering truck. Big jobs like dressing chickens, freezing corn, picking cherries and shelling peas required all family members, including grandparents. These were all day jobs, but seemed like a party to the kids. On the other hand, bean walking was not a glamorous job. Don took pride in clean fields and the girls learned the proper way to pull a weed. It was a dirty and sweaty job, but when the last field was done the family celebrated with a trip to the Jefferson swimming pool, where Don showed off his farmer's tan and Mary wowed everyone with her side stroke. The braver children jumped off of the "tower" diving board doing "can-openers" and "cannon balls".

All the girls attended college, married and left home to raise their own families, although Coon Valley Farm remains "home" in their hearts and a fun place to visit. As Denise always said, "Mom and Dad were fun parents." Don and Mary eventually celebrated 68 wonderful years of marriage on August 5, 2013.

Mary passed away on August 6, 2013 at Iowa Lutheran Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa. She was preceded in death by her parents, two infant children, 1 grandchild and 1 great-grandchild. Mary is survived by her husband Don; daughters Denise (Steven) Harberts, Marianne (Roger) Carlson, Teresa (James) Shahan, and Gina (Tom) Harrington; 13 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren; and her brother Fr. Clark (Lewis Kerman) Trafton.