

Judy Behrens Obituary

Judith Gay (Behrens) Reed, 83, of Waukee, died Saturday, July 25, 2026, after a brief battle with brain cancer.

She was born on September 30, 1942, in Cedar Falls to parents Virgel E. Behrens and Palma Lillian (Borlaug) Behrens. She attended Cedar Falls High School and the State College of Iowa (University of Northern Iowa), where she met her husband Patrick William Reed. They married on June 30, 1962, at St. John's Lutheran Church in Cedar Falls. She worked briefly as a dental hygienist, yet majored in Home Economics, which served as a strong foundation for her most prized roles as wife and mother to her five children.

The year after they were married, Judy and Pat welcomed their first son, Patrick William Reed Jr. In January 1964, they moved to Dayton and welcomed their second son, Mikel. They moved to Fort Dodge in 1966 where they spent 30 years building a life and raising a family, including the addition of daughter Erin in 1968.

Judy was known as a resourceful, wise, DIY "Jackie of all trades" woman that knew how to cook, garden, paint, wallpaper, give hair perms to family, craft décor and gifts, breed and whelp litters of pups, lay tile, and even fix a toilet or leaky faucet - all before the luxury of the internet. She was a gifted seamstress who sewed curtains, formal dresses and clothing for herself and family whenever time allowed (or didn't!).

In the spring of 1980, Judy and Pat's hearts and home grew when they adopted Ty, a three-year-old boy from South Korea. Three years later, they were blessed again with the adoption of Lindsey, also from South Korea, completing the family that brought Judy so much joy.

Around the same time, she founded "Frame'n Collectibles," a picture framing business to help provide for the family and offset the kid's college expenses, eventually moving the business into Colonial Fireplace and Art Gallery, where she ran her business along with managing the art gallery and gift shop for more than a decade. At that time, she also was an Art Appreciation volunteer in the Fort Dodge Community schools, teaching youth about various artists. As a cancer survivor, she combined her love of art, and her support of cancer victims, by later participating alongside her son in the Foundation for Hospital Art's 50-state cancer Paintfest campaign in 2016.

While residing in Fort Dodge, she also was an active member of Grace Lutheran Church, where she was involved in Bible study, Circle and volunteered for many church events, and was an active member of P.E.O., Questors antique collectors club, several book clubs, and a member of the UNI Parents Association board (UNIPA). She also never missed supporting her kids, and later her grandkids as much as possible, at their sporting, music and school-related events.

Her greatest joy came from making others feel welcome, cared for, and loved, and her home was a place where family and friends gathered, traditions were celebrated, and everyone left well fed. She served as "Host Mom" to around ten foreign exchange high school students over the years who lived with the Reeds and hosted a multitude of international delegations through Rotary International. She also loved hosting their annual Labor Day shrimp boil for friends and family, and spent nearly two decades hosting chili and cinnamon roll dinners for post tournament wrestling teams her son coached.

In 1996, Pat and Judy relocated to an acreage near the Brushy Creek, Lehigh area, where they lived until 2018. Judy often described those two decades as the happiest years of her life, making memories with many of her 11 grandchildren. Gardening, craft projects, nature walks, fishing, swimming at the beach, lunch at the tearoom, campfires, pottery, cooking favorite foods, and camping were all part of the lineup she planned when hosting her grandkids for overnights, or extended stays in the summer affectionately known as "Camp Cousins at Camp Brushy."

In 2018, Pat and Judy moved back to Fort Dodge where they lived for six years before relocating to Waukee in 2024 to be closer to family. After moving to Waukee, they joined Immanuel Lutheran Church, where she joined bible study and had recently joined the Four F's retirees, and she attended Above and Beyond Cancer fitness classes at the Waukee Y twice a week.

She was devoted to her family and pets, loving many dogs and cats over the years, despite having asthma and animal allergies requiring allergy shots. Family, carrying on traditions, and remaining steadfast in her faith, throughout her cancer journey, were always her priority. While she attempted to pass on her Norwegian heritage love of lutefisk, with little to no success, she was successful teaching her children, grandchildren and extended family how to make lefse, creating an annual holiday tradition. She also was especially passionate about and proud of her late Uncle Norman Borlaug, known as the "Father of the Green Revolution", and his impact on agriculture and the fight against world hunger. While it meant a great deal to her

to be loved, she never sought attention or wanted anyone to fuss over her. Instead, she quietly lived out the humility she admired in her mother and her Uncle Norm, never seeking recognition and preferring substance over show. She demonstrated that quiet strength throughout her courageous battle with cancer, facing it with grace and without fanfare.

Her legacy lives on not only through the family she cherished, but in the countless traditions, meals, gardens, conversations, and acts of kindness that continue because of her.

Survived by: her husband of 64 years Patrick; her children Patrick "Bill" William Reed Jr. (Kerri) of Newton; Mikel of Kennesaw, Georgia; Erin (Doug) of Wauke; Ty of Houston, Texas; and Lindsey (Paul) of Colorado Springs, Colorado; a brother Ted (Jane) of Minburn; 11 grandchildren Patrick "Trae" William Reed III (Maddie), Andrew (AnnaGrace) Reed, Abby (Travis) Ewing, Ashlee Downs (Connor), Alexandra Reed, Paige (Shane) Jansen, Zachary (Daniela) Downs, Mason Reed, Max Reed, Jonas Solko, and Liam Solko; 8 great-grandchildren: Thompson Ewing, Toby Ewing, Harper Jansen, Scarlett Reed, Teddy Ewing, Parker Jansen, Virginia "Gigi" Reed, and Patrick "Pax" William Reed IV; nephews Matthew (Emily) Behrens, Jim (Kari) Reed, and Nguyen (Mei Ling) Pham; nieces Leah (Tim) Berte, Charlene (Pat) Kelley, Roberta Nigro, Gail (David) Lundquist, and Sarah Porsche; and her beloved pets Luna, Manny and Stubby. She was preceded in death by her parents.