

Mary Jane Walker Skaff

April 10, 1938 – October 7, 1998

Mary Jane Skaff, 60, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, passed away October 7, 1998, at McKennan Hospice following a nine-month illness with cancer.

Mary was born April 10, 1938, in Madison, South Dakota, to Frank and Ella (Lewis) Walker. She became Deaf as an infant following measles and attended the South Dakota School for the Deaf in Sioux Falls, graduating in 1957.



On January 31, 1959, she married Vincent J. Skaff in Sioux Falls. They lived in Brownton, Minnesota, while Mary worked at 3M in nearby Hutchinson. In 1974, they moved to Sioux Falls, where she worked for Litton Industries and later Citibank. She was on health leave from Citibank at the time of her death.

A hardworking and devoted mother, Mary raised four children while working full time following her divorce. Her daughter Marcy remembered her determination and independence while navigating a hearing world with limited access to communication services.

Mary had a passion for sewing and made much of her own clothing, including jackets, coats, and wool blazers. She enjoyed cross-stitching, painting designs on clothing, sharing craft ideas with her daughters, and decorating cakes for family and friends.

She especially treasured time with her five grandchildren, playing games, assembling puzzles, and teaching them sign language. An active member of the Deaf Club, Mary looked forward to annual trips with fellow members and preserved her travel memories in photograph albums.

She is survived by her son, Joshua "Josh" Skaff of Sioux Falls; daughters, Debbie Skaff of St. Paul, Minnesota, Marcy (David) Keithley of Mankato, Minnesota, and Tammy Skaff and her fiancé, Barry Arneson, of Yankton, South Dakota; five grandchildren; and sisters, Donna (Duane) Bjorklund of Madison and Bonnie (Robert) Sorsen of Dell Rapids.

Mary was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Albert.

Memorial services were held October 10, 1998, at Ellsworth Funeral Home in Madison, with the Rev. Steve Vetter officiating and music provided by Gayla Lemme. Burial was at Graceland Cemetery in Madison.