



Carolyn Dee "Penny" Cook

June 3, 1939 - January 2, 2026

A baby girl was born at Portland Sanitarium & Hospital, Portland, Oregon, on June 3, 1939. Her parents were H. Grant and Helen E. Ridley. They named their daughter "Carolyn Dee". About two weeks later her Aunt Jeannette said she should be called "Penny". Henceforth and for the rest of her life, except for legal purposes, she was known as Penny.

In May 1941, a sister, Jeannette Marie, was added to the Ridley family. In June of 1945 the girls welcomed their brother Richard Grant, known as Rick. Penny enjoyed her early school years in Portland. In 1947 Mr. Ridley moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan, where he began his career as an industrial photographer in the automobile industry. After clearing their Portland home, Mrs. Ridley moved with the three children, Penny, Jeannette, and Rick, ages 8, 6, and 2, across the United States by train. They arrived in Ann Arbor where there was deep snow on the ground. It was a memorable experience for the children.

The small unincorporated community of Cherry Hill became a more permanent home in 1949. Penny attended the two-room Cherry Hill School beginning in the sixth grade. She graduated with one other classmate on June 3, 1953. Penny was a registered Girl Scout for many years beginning during this time of her life. She spent several weeks each summer at Girl Scout camp, finally becoming a camp counselor and registered water safety leader.

She took ballet and piano lessons and continued to play the piano wherever one was available. Grandma, Adelia Johnson, lived with the family for about seven years. As a former teacher she encouraged Penny's desire to become a teacher, a vision Penny was apparently born with.

Penny attended Plymouth High School, graduating in 1957. She was a good student and participated in a number of school activities. An exciting time for her was spending the summer after graduation with her Aunt Jeannette and Uncle Gail in San Francisco. She received a Bachelor's Degree from Eastern Michigan University in 1961, then continued her studies as required to maintain teaching certificates. She had a career in middle-elementary education that spanned about thirty years, with positions in Michigan, California, and Washington. Penny retired from the Phoenix, Arizona, school district where the Spanish language she learned in high school was an asset.

Penny met Ivan Cook in Phoenix. They married during the summer of 1980 and made their home in Scottsdale. She was a step-mother to his children, Pam and Andy, supporting them through their school years. The family had many adventures together, traveling, camping, and exploring. Penny and Ivan's final trip together was to Alaska. While their marriage didn't last, Penny and Ivan remained close friends until his death.

After retirement, in about 2000, Penny moved to Corvallis, Oregon. She enjoyed local cultural events and visits with cousins Jan and her husband Doug McKirdie, and Judy with her husband Bill Thompson. During this time Penny developed both her knitting and weaving talents, becoming an expert craftsperson in both. She enjoyed experimenting with the interplay of many colors in both of these crafts. Semi-annual trips to Silver Falls State Park were high-lights of each year. She enjoyed the companionship of many knitters, along with her sister Jeannette and niece Lee. Penny was an active participant in the Salem Weavers Guild (renamed to Salem Fiberarts Guild) ,

where many of her beautiful woven dish towels were sold at their annual fund-raising event..

Penny always enjoyed having pet cats and dogs. She cared for these companions with love. In Corvallis, she was a foster parent for many cats. At one time she had a mother cat with five young kittens and her own pets, a cat and a dog.

In December, 2023, when Penny's mental and physical health made it unsafe for her to live alone, she moved into an assisted living center in Corvallis. After several moves she was supported by Regent Court Memory Care of Corvallis. Penny's engaging and optimistic personality was appreciated by many of the staff and other residents.

Penny Cook died on January 2, 2026. She was memorialized at a gathering of her many craft companions, her sister and niece Lee, on Sunday, January 4, at the New Morning Bakery in Corvallis. Many of her hand knit sweaters and woven scarves were given to these friends. It was a party that would have delighted her.

Penny Cook is survived by her step-children, Pamela and Andrew Cook in California, her sister Jeannette Kelley of Cottonwood, Idaho, and her brother Rick Ridley and his wife Linda from Ann Arbor, Michigan. She has two nieces and three nephews and friends from every time and place in her life.

Those who predeceased her were her parents H. Grant and Helen E. Ridley, her former husband Ivan Cook, and brother-in-law Fred Kelley, and many beloved pets.

Memorial gifts in honor of Carolyn Dee “Penny” Cook can be made to Samaritan Health Services - Evergreen Hospice, Albany, Oregon; they served her well, though it was for a short time. She donated regularly to the Heartland Humane Shelter & Care, Corvallis, Oregon; the Vina Moses Center, also in Corvallis; and the Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, Alabama.

Tribute Wall

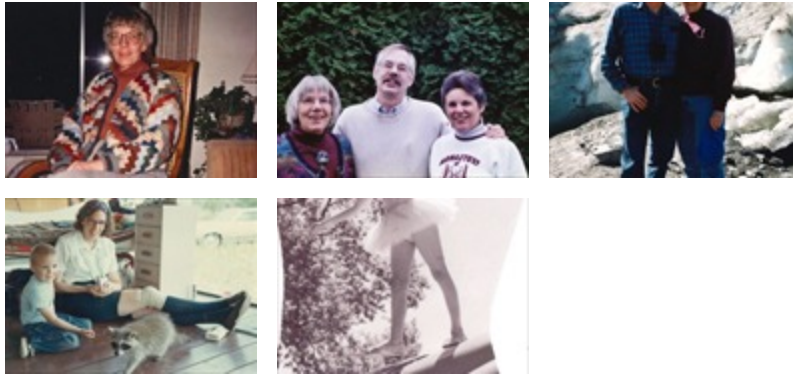
MF

“ *Such a joy to spend some time and experience the love and interactions between sisters that Jeannette and Penny shared. I loved her exuberant excitement and recognition when Jeannette would walk into the room.
An amazing life, career, touching so many. Loving so many students, truly until the end, we were all in her classroom. Blessings to Penny and the family.
Mary Kay F.*

Mary K F - February 14 at 03:38 PM



“ *7 files added to the album Memories Album*



McHenry Funeral Home - February 11 at 03:18 PM