



Mary Kucler

April 28, 1916 - May 22, 2012

Living was something Mary did well for 96-plus years.

She was the eldest child of four born to Esther and William York. They farmed near Bloomfield, Iowa, and struggled during the Depression years. Mary left home to live with her aunt in Lancaster, Mo., who offered to train her in food preparation and teach her the restaurant business. Mary and her husband, Joe Kucler, started their own business, Kucler Concessions, in Sioux Falls, S.D. Eventually, they had food operations at drive-in theaters in Mitchell, Watertown and Sioux Falls, including the zoo, swimming pools (two), horse and car races, fairs, and athletic and farm events. They had many vendors who started their business experience with them as teenagers.

They were honored to be chosen to serve food at the National Plowing Contest in 1960 in Sioux Falls, where presidential candidate Senator John F. Kennedy presented a speech on farm policy. A huge tent was erected, and equipment was brought in and set up in a field to serve the crowd. This venue was more challenging in pouring rain, wearing rubber boots. Mary loved golf and time spent at their second home on the golf course at Lake Okoboji, Iowa. She was especially proud of her hole in one and any time she gave her athletic husband (semiprofessional hockey player, 1942 to 1944, Coast Guard Cutters) a run for his money in a round of golf. Her husband was the leading scorer both years the Coast Guard Cutters won the Eastern Amateur Hockey League Championship in 1942-1943 and again in 1943-1944.

Mary loved gardening and when she was 86, her yard was featured on a local

Sioux Falls television channel as one of the finest. Mary had true grit, great organizational skills, a beautiful smile and a sense of survival. She was a self-made businesswoman. Whatever she did, she did the best she could, even in the last weeks of her life. Her caregivers described her as a hoot! Her advice: Laugh, love and be Mary!

Mary's husband of 54 years preceded her in death, as did her first husband, Rolla. She moved to Corvallis in 2003 and was happy, surrounded by her surviving family members. They include daughter, Shirley White Peterson (Spencer); grandchildren, Scott Peterson and Sheila Pederson (Charles); and great-grandchildren, Spencer and Andrew, who knew her as "Great Ma"; her sister, Gertrude, and husband (Don) live in Lancaster, Mo. Brothers who preceded her in death include Gerald and Orval. Mary will be reunited with her husband, Joe, at Black Hills National Cemetery, Sturgis, Meade County, S.D. 57785.

Memorial contributions in her honor can be made to the Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation (Healing Gardens) or to the Corvallis Rose Society (Avery Park Rose Garden improvements). Mail to McHenry Funeral Home, 206 N.W. Fifth St., Corvallis, OR 97330.

At her request, no formal funeral is planned.