



Constance L. Riopelle

October 7, 1940 - February 15, 2022

Constance "Connie" Riopelle, of Williamsburg MI, passed away peacefully on February 15, 2022 at home, surrounded by those she loved. Her life was defined by strong determination, deep kindness, and a driving passion to help the underdog.

Connie was born on October 7, 1940 to the late Howard and Lucille (Grace) Riopelle. She was preceded in death by her loving partner of 42 years, Sue Dowden. She is survived by her sister, Nancy MacNall, her nephew, Jeff Thatch, nieces Kimber Thatch and Marita MacNall McGee, great nieces, Kristen Walker, Crystal Tillman, Samantha Tillman, and multiple great nephews. She is also survived by Katie, her faithful dog who stayed by her side until the end. Connie was also preceded in death by her nephew, Robert MacNall. Connie was active and vivacious her entire life. She loved all outdoor activities including tennis, kayaking, golfing, and field hockey in her younger days. She played competitive tennis until her 80th birthday. Connie represented the State of Michigan in National Senior Tennis Olympics in Albuquerque, NM in 2018. She traveled the world with friends and family and enjoyed many adventures. Her "happy place" was Bois Blanc Island where she spent every summer, enjoying the rich beauty that only the island could provide with solace and comfort to all that visited. Her other passion the last couple years was spending time with her good friend Tammy Euper Short and their dogs, driving and camping in her motor home that she named "HOWIE" ("House On Wheels Instant Excitement").

Connie spent her working career in northern Michigan as an educator, administrator and consultant. She had a Masters degree from the University of Michigan and was a true "maize and blue" fan. Her final wish was granted to donate her body to U of M for medical research.

Connie was actively involved with numerous charitable organizations throughout her life. She was a constant advocate for the homeless and undeserved. She was an early cornerstone of the Jubilee House. With VOSH International Vision Care, she traveled to Honduras and helped provide the gift of sight. For the past five years, Connie was an instrumental leader in PoWeR! Book Bags, working tirelessly on grants, budgeting, planning, and expanding the nonprofit's reach. This nonprofit was especially important to Connie because of her lifelong passion for education, making a difference in the lives of

thousands of kids in Northern Michigan. In lieu of flowers, those wishing to continue her legacy are invited to contribute to PoWeR! Book Bags (PO Box 533, Suttons Bay, MI 49682)

A Celebration of Life ceremony will be held Saturday, March 5th, 2022 at Grace Episcopal Church, 341 Washington St, Traverse City MI 49684 with visitation starting at 1pm and service commencing at 2pm.

Tribute Wall



“ Video Tribute



Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home & Cremation Services - March 04 at 06:19 PM

MF

“ *Miss Riopelle was my teacher, coach and principal at Bellaire High School. She was a strong woman and excellent role model. Her expectations were very high and she didn't think there was a reason not to rise up to them. Miss Riopelle and many of the other fine teachers at Bellaire Schools made a difference in my life. They made me believe I could be who I wanted to be. I went on to become a teacher and recently retired as an Elementary School Principal. I am so impressed with Miss Riopelle and the contributions she made every year of her life. She was amazing. Please accept my condolences on the passing of this wonderful person so many were privileged to know.*

Marcy Griffith Farnsworth - March 14 at 08:56 PM

“ Remembering Connie

I don't remember exactly when I met Connie, but it was on the tennis courts, where pretty much all of my memories of Connie took place. It was heartening to find someone about my age who was still playing tennis, playing it well, and playing hard. We both had a background in education and we both loved walking, traveling, being outdoors, and owning dogs. Connie was a strong woman with strong opinions, but did not impose them on others and I admired both of those characteristics. She especially had strong opinions about doctors, and I knew that if Connie said a doctor was good, that was the doctor for me and for my husband. Our times on our 65 and over tennis team trips to sectionals were very special for all of us. Connie took over driving Big Blue, the van that ferried us all to various nearby states and that only Connie felt comfortable driving in the more congested areas. She drove it with the confidence of a trucker or a bus driver, and the rest of us just went along for the ride. Our goal has always been to win at sectionals and go on to nationals, and we have come very close several times. On one of the trips, we had multiple illnesses and injuries and were down to only 5 players, Connie and 2 teams of partners who were used to playing with each other and were doing well in the tournament. We were supposed to field 3 doubles teams, but if the 2 teams could win, we would be able to advance to nationals. Connie selflessly offered to become team manager and insisted that the 4 players keep playing even if it meant she would not get her time on the court. She took over the role of strategizer and cheerleader, scoping out other teams and sharing tips with the players. We made it to the semi-finals with only 4 players and with Connie and our injured captain cheering from the sidelines. We came within just two points of the finals, and one of these years we still hope to make it to nationals. When we do, Connie will be with us, as cheerleader, friend, and inspiration.

Mary Lee Bretz

mary lee bretz - February 25 at 04:02 PM



“ Connie was a wonderful person..I met her playing tennis, quite often as her partner..she was athletic, competitive and fun.. but then discovered so many other things..she summered on an island ..and when I joined the congregation at Grace Episcopal there she was ..directing the program for the homeless..I know she was a person of great faith and I'm confident her soul will Rest In Peace..

Carol Manty - February 25 at 09:21 AM

KT

“ 8 files added to the tribute wall



Kimber Thatch - February 22 at 06:33 PM