



Diane Gay Whitson

December 12, 1943 - May 27, 2026

Diane Gay Whitson, age 82, of Albia, IA, passed away on Wednesday, May 27, 2026, at the Comfort House in Pella, IA. Diane had been surrounded by family and friends in the days and weeks leading up to her passing which comforted her immensely during her sudden illness.

Diane was born on December 12, 1943, at home in Hammond, IN, to Charles "Pete" and Margaret "June" (Gay) Smith. The family eventually moved to Avery, IA, where Diane grew up and attended school through the 8th grade. Diane was proud to be an "Avery kid". Diane went on to attend Albia High School, graduating with the Class of 1961. She furthered her education at Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri. On December 30, 1967, she was united in marriage to Philip Dean Whitson at the Albia Methodist Church and to this union, 2 children were born: Cheri and Chris. Diane and Phil were blessed with 53 years of marriage prior to Phil's passing on November 12, 2021. She looked forward to being united again with Phil.

In her younger years, Diane had fond memories working at The Coffee Shop in Albia. Later, she went to work in the office at Chamberlain Manufacturing. Upon becoming a mother, Diane devoted herself to raising her children. Diane was an involved mother who attended all her children's events, helped with homework or volunteered for their activities. Still, she was a true 80's mom who held back judgement and advice often trusting them to learn from their

own mistakes. She later returned to the workforce as a Title I teacher's aide for the Albia School District for 26 years until her retirement in 2005. Diane made lifelong friends with her colleagues, and her students remembered her kindly.

A woman of strong faith, Diane was a dedicated member of the Avery Church for 72 years. She put her heart into her church holding many roles of leadership throughout the years. When Diane was younger, she enjoyed bowling in a league with friends for many years at Lor-Lon-Ga Lanes. Diane loved holidays. She looked forward to decorating her home for each holiday and season. Christmas was her favorite. She loved to bake cookies, fudge and caramels, sharing plates of sweets with her family and friends. For many years, she became known as "the Popcorn Ball Lady," to many in town, who would even drive to her house, as she handed out her homemade treats each Halloween. Diane was a member of Garden Club and enjoyed entering the flower show at the county fair each summer. Diane's green thumb also showed in the yard, she worked hours in, that she and Phil were so proud of. Recently, Diane had enjoyed her volunteering activities at the Look Nook at the Monroe County Hospital and the time spent dining out or going to musical events with family and friends. Above all else, Diane loved her family deeply and cherished the time spent with her children, grandchildren and her sisters, who she had an especially strong bond with. She showed her love also to her large extended family. She was so good at maintaining relationships, letting family know she was thinking of them through cards, calls or visits whether next door or across the country.

Diane is survived by her daughter, Cheri (Jim) Kasella; her son, Chris (Gia Tornabene); grandchildren, Charlie and Olivia Kasella; siblings, Hope (Don) Brouk and Faith (Darrell) Carter; and siblings-in-law, Larry (Phyllis) Whitson, Carolyn Plum, and Wayne Whitson. Diane is also survived by several nieces, nephews, cousins, and good friends.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Phil; her parents, Pete and June Smith; a sister in infancy, Pamela Rae; her parents-in-law, Cecil and Alberta Whitson and brothers-in-law, Jerry Whitson ,Steve Whitson, and Jim Plum.

Visitation will be held from 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at the Tharp Funeral Home in Albia, with Diane's family present to greet family and friends.

Funeral services will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at the Tharp Funeral Home in Albia, with Pastor Teresa Miller officiating. Burial will follow services at Oak View Cemetery in Albia.

Memorials have been established to the Avery Church and St. Jude's Children's Hospital

Cemetery Details

Oak View Cemetery

602 2nd Ave.
Albia, IA 52531

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 2. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Tharp Funeral Home
116 Benton Ave.
Albia, IA 52531
(641) 932-3129
<https://www.tharpfh.com/>

Funeral Service

JUN 3. 10:30 AM (CT)

Tharp Funeral Home
116 Benton Ave.
Albia, IA 52531
(641) 932-3129
<https://www.tharpfh.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ Dearest Hope and all of Diane's family. I just today learned of Diane's passing. I am so sorry for your loss. We all have the fondest memories of growing up in Avery. What a wonderful childhood and friendships we all had. Please know my prayers are for you and Diane's family. I know she will be greatly missed.
Linda (Lane) Hopkins

Linda Hopkins - June 11 at 04:13 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Diane Gay Whitson.

June 02 at 05:18 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



June 02 at 04:21 PM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



June 02 at 02:47 PM

J(

“ John & Jessie Whitson (Hawaii) purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



John & Jessie Whitson (Hawaii) - June 02 at 02:15 PM

BY

“ Our deepest sympathies to you. May you be held close in God's love, bringing comfort and peace in the assurance that one day you will be reunited with your loved ones for all eternity. We made a memorial gift in Diane's name to St. Jude Children's hospital. Byron & Linda Yehling

Byron & Linda Yehling - June 02 at 10:04 AM

LS

“ Love & Hugs, Katy (Plum) Schwingle purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



Love & Hugs, Katy (Plum) Schwingle - June 01 at 11:18 PM

LS

“ Love & Hugs, Katy (Plum) Schwingle planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Diane Gay Whitson.

Love & Hugs, Katy (Plum) Schwingle - June 01 at 11:18 PM



“ *Angel's Embrace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.*



June 01 at 10:57 PM



“ *So very sorry to hear of Diane's passing. Such a nice woman from a really nice family. Thinking of you Hope & Faith.*
Julie Stafford

Julie Stafford - June 01 at 06:18 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.*



June 01 at 04:15 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Diane Gay Whitson.*

June 01 at 04:15 PM



“ *In Heaven's Arms Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



June 01 at 11:56 AM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



June 01 at 10:59 AM



“ *Love, Dana & Jeff Riedel* purchased the *Large Basket Garden* for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



Love, Dana & Jeff Riedel - May 31 at 05:50 PM



“ *Infinite Love* was purchased for the family of Diane Gay Whitson.



May 30 at 03:34 PM

FM

“ *Bill and I are so very sorry about Diane’s death. Many prayers were said over the last several weeks. God had other plans for her. She so missed Phil. Once again they can walk hand in hand.*
Bill and Fran (DeMoss) Magie

Fran Magie - May 29 at 07:56 PM