



Gary and Karen Christensen

July 30, 1939 - January 15, 2026

Gary Howard and Karen Ann Christensen

July 30, 1939 - January 15, 2026

October 18, 1944 - December 10, 2025

It seems fitting and honorable to write a joint obituary for Gary and Karen Christensen who entered heaven at ages 86 and 81, respectively, a mere 36 days apart after being married for 61 years.

They are survived by three adult children: Kimberly Akers, Thad Christensen, and Guy Christensen (and his wife, Manoela); six grandchildren: Morgan Jane (Akers) Moder (and her husband, Jordyn), Clark Akers, Preston Akers (and his wife, Alyse), Emily Christensen, Tyler Christensen, and Ayla Christensen; and three great-grandchildren: Tommy Jane, Tripp, and Andie Moder. Gary and Karen were also anticipating the arrival of another great-grandchild: Baby Boy Akers, joyfully expected in June.

Gary was born and raised on a farm in Brookings, South Dakota, by his parents, Harry and Myrtle Christensen. He had one brother, Robert Christensen.

Karen was adopted as an infant and raised in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, by Rev. Harry and Tillie Jane Gregerson, alongside their son, Richard Gregerson. Gary and Karen married and began their family in South Dakota and moved to Virginia in 1976.

Throughout his life, Gary led his family as a faithful husband, involved father, and loving "Papa" to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His

professional career began with International Harvester, followed by more than 40 years with the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, where he served as a National Bank Examiner. Despite his demanding career, Gary made time to coach his sons' baseball teams.

Gary, like his wife, spent several retirement years driving a school bus for Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), a role they both enjoyed for the children and the schedule. Gary also devoted years to cultivating a garden of vegetables and flowers, most notably his famous tomatoes, which became a family favorite. A hardworking and generous man, he faithfully used his time and God-given resources to support his family and treasured staying connected with longtime friends from the OCC. His greatest joy was investing in the next generation through his grandchildren.

Karen devoted her life to being a faithful wife, adoring mother, and doting grandmother and great-grandmother. She considered her lifework to be caring for Gary and raising their three children. Over the years, Karen worked part-time as the owner of Novel Ideas, a small shop in Fairfax, Virginia, that sold used books and handcrafted gifts, and later managed a TCBY store. Above all, she will be remembered as a humble spirit, thoughtful listener, and exceptional cook and baker who lived life with a trusting and gentle heart.

The final eight years of Gary and Karen's lives were marked by both joy and hardship. Gary patiently cared for Karen as dementia gradually affected her health. In his later years, Gary faced pulmonary fibrosis, which slowly limited his physical abilities. During their final months, Gary and Karen were supported by nearby family and devoted caregivers while enjoying sports and Pastor Gary Hamrick sermons on television. By the grace of God, they were able to complete their earthly lives at home, surrounded by those they loved. Gary and Karen will be deeply missed, but they leave behind a storehouse of cherished memories, including frequent family gatherings, vacations to the Outer Banks, and summer pool days at their Clifton, Virginia property. Other beloved traditions not to be forgotten are ice cream runs, giant bowls of

stovetop popcorn, making lefse with Grandma, Papa's incredible waffles, and dancing in the kitchen to old country music, including songs by Tom T. Hall. The family finds comfort in the hope that Gary and Karen's simple faith in Jesus has led them to eternal life—free from physical and emotional suffering and at perfect peace in the presence of Christ.

Plans are underway for a family service at the Chapel in the Hills (Rapid City, SD) and burial at Greenwood Cemetery (Brookings, SD) this summer.

The family extends heartfelt gratitude to Kaylee, Jazzy, and Mayra, whose compassionate care made it possible for Gary and Karen to remain comfortably in their home during a season of growing physical needs. They also thank the medical professionals at Ennoble Care for treating Gary and Karen with dignity and professionalism.

Those wishing to honor Gary and Karen may consider a donation to Immanuel Christian School in Springfield, Virginia, a school they deeply loved. They took great joy in knowing that three of their grandchildren received a Christian education there.

<https://app.aplos.com/aws/give/ImmanuelChristianSchool/give>

Tribute Wall

JF

“ I am so sorry to hear of Gary and Karen’s passing. I grew up on a farm not far from Gary. He was a great guy and later my husband Jim and I were great friends with them in Sioux Falls when you were a baby Kim and we had a baby Liz so we had a lot in common. Many memories of good times and days gone by. Sending blessings, love and sympathy to you all. They have reached there heavenly home.
🙏❤️ Love, Jan Falor and Jim now with Jesus



Jan Falor - March 14 at 10:11 PM