



Art by Guardian member David Orr, from newspaper picture of Shirley looking through spotting scope

ONE SPECIAL LADY

Remembrances of our dear friend Shirley Casper, from mostly Jo Daviess Co. Guardian members-- for her family. Memories help us cope with the loss of a loved one, and we hope these pages bring comfort and a laugh or two. We were blessed to know her.

Some people come into your life and go, with hardly a ripple in the stream. Not so with Shirley, and her friends here want her family to have our comments and reminisces about this very special lady. We all could write a book about her.

Grace Storch

Rosemary Burns, Elizabeth---"She was enthusiastic, humorous, helpful, generous, quick to volunteer; she was her own person. She loved books, gardening, being hostess, and was always prompt. Being on time meant being 5-10 minutes early. She did cross stitching, quilting and collected cookbooks and frogs. I think about and miss her a lot".

Grace Storch, Elizabeth----"On being prompt—As many of us can admit with embarrassment, Shirley was late for a meeting. When we called her, she was still engrossed with a jigsaw puzzle and time got away from her. Woops!"

Alan Anderson, USFWS, ----“Shirley called on me several times when we were neighbors. I helped change a flat tire, worked in the garden and ate Christmas cookies. I will always remember her laugh, kind words and cook books. She found me a great recipe for vanilla wafer ice box cake—thanks Shirley.”
Rickie Rachuy, Stockton----“I met Shirley on the 1st Spring Bird Count I ever did for the Guardians back in 1992.

She, Jim Rachuy and I were a team for the next 15 years. She joined us every Spring, even after she had moved to Morris in '02. During those years, she loved to tease Jim and me about our maturing relationship, insisting that when we first met, we were unfailingly polite, but after our marriage in 1996, we started to squabble like any married couple.

I remember Shirley as an avid joiner, belonging among others, to a book club, gardening club, antiques club, the Guardians and the Prairie Enthusiasts where she was our ace seed picker and prescribed fire maven. She tackled everything she did with enthusiasm and energy. During many Christmas holidays she held a Ladies Lunch at her beautifully decorated home and made each of us a tree ornament depicting local birds. She will be sorely missed by Jim and me.”

Ed Britton, USFWS----“Shirley was a personal friend, as well as a founding Board member of the Palisades Chapter of the Friends of the Upper Miss Refuge. She devoted many volunteer hours in the Refuge Visitor Center, helped out on several public environmental education programs and conducted a variety of biological surveys. Shirley was instrumental in building support within the USFWS and with Congressman Lane Evans for our new Refuge Visitor Center that opened in 2000. It was through Shirley that we became aware of Gary and David Ingersoll and ultimately named our new building the Ingersoll Wetlands Learning Center.”

Grace Storch, ----And speaking of the volunteering for USFWS, Shirley and I did a lot of that for F&W for many years and reminisced often about some of the more challenging jobs such as doing an avian botulism cleanup on the Mississippi River. It was nasty scooping up dead and dying birds, and we had to get out of the airboat sometimes. The sucking mud was like quicksand and we had to literally be pulled out, one boot at a time, only to be mired again and again. We joked about perhaps having the fish pick our bones if we hadn't been rescued.”

Joan Harmet, Elizabeth----“Shirley was adamant that the Natural Area Guardians not be called NAGS. We teased her about it. She was Guardian Secretary and wrote Minutes by hand long before computers were so popular, and she was also Program Chair for awhile.”

Debbie Dee, Scales Mound----“When I worked for USFWS, I called on Shirley to do many things. She racked up many volunteer hours. And personally, I wanted to be like her when I got older.”

Barbara Rutherford, Apple River----“So much could be said about Shirley---a wonderful friend, and I admired her way with crafts, and loved the birds she made for us each Christmas party.”

Randy Downing, Stockton----“A warm hearted bulldog (and I mean that in only the best way), with an engaging smile, great sense of humor and always willing to help. Sylvia's recollection was that Shirley always spoke her mind. I would endorse that as well. She was unique and a friend to all. My most memorable moment with Shirley was doing a burn at her place. It was a somewhat complicated burn with several interconnected odd shaped pieces. We were more than half done heading for home (and snacks) when we discovered a 180 wind shift driving a headfire toward her house. I was on Shirley's squad. We raced up the flank of the prairie, Shirley with torch in hand, me with flapper flapping, to start a backfire moving toward the headfire. Our little backfire seemed to creep ever so slowly toward the

onrushing headfire. Then as fires are wont to do, the self generated wind from the headfire began to suck the backfire toward it and the whole thing ended in a final rush of flame skyward, followed by silence and relief.”

Grace Storch----“And speaking of fires, the above mentioned burn may be the one where the flames were so high, they were just about reaching the overhead power line causing arcing. It was an impressive, memorable and for a few moments, heart stopping experience.”

Pat Wemstrom, Mount Carroll----“ We didn’t know Shirley as long or as well as we would have liked, but we’re sure others have mentioned her cheerful spirits and great sense of humor. When we first moved here, talking to Shirley was one of the highlights of Thursday birding. She was just so friendly and fun. We did enjoy her putting into words what many of us would be thinking, ‘Is it time for lunch?’ “

Chuck Wemstrom----She loved birding, but next to that was her great love of books. One of her prized possessions was her library. She designed her own house, had some of it done, and finished off the inside herself while living in the garage. She was awe inspiring and to this day a model that we all strive to live up to.”

Anita Landry, Hebron, IL (formerly from Savanna)----“Some of my most memorable fun days were spent with Shirley. It was common to get an early morning phone call saying someone had reported Sandhill Cranes and let’s go find them, or some other wonderful bird, then we’d have to do lunch, always lunch. We also shared the love of quilting or spending an hour on the phone discussing the latest book we read. Shirley was a true friend and I still miss her phone calls, after 7pm, ‘because it’s free’. I miss you Shirley.”

Elda Goodmiller, Elizabeth----Wonderful memories help me cope with the loss of Shirley. We met through the Guardians and shared many interests, we ‘clicked’. We loved flower gardening. Hers was weed free; I grow very healthy weeds. A Mother’s Day was spent at Mississippi Palisades State Park and a Cerulean Warbler followed us along the trail. Sandhill Crane listening at Spring Lake and trips to Bickelhaupt Arboretum in Clinton were just a few of the wonderful things we did with time for shopping and lunch. The Garden Walk for the Hanover Library was certainly one of her pet projects. After delivering brochures to various garden centers, we craved ice cream but as we approached Happy Joe’s in Galena we saw fire trucks. It had burned that morning. We stayed with Douglas the time we went to the Chicago Botanical Gardens. I did so enjoy the garden walks. I now grow Ligularia since it was one of Shirley’s favorites. Every time I see it, I will remember her; my memorial to a wonderful friend. I miss you!”

Grace Storch----“One birding morning gathering in March, I brought a birthday cake for Rosemary Burns. Shirley got a bit huffy. ‘Well’, she said, ‘No one remembered MY birthday Feb. 1st.’ I never forgot to send her birthday greetings after that. And her delicious pasties--- after a morning of volunteering, or birding, we lunched at a favorite little restaurant in Savanna, Anne’s. Shirley’s usual was a patty melt. A discussion of how to make pasties started to heat up with one of the women, that the only way to make them was with roast beef, everyone knew that! Well, Shirley’s temper flared because SHE made them with ground beef and as far as she was concerned, THAT was the only way to make pasties. They were truly delicious. I’ll have to dig that recipe out again. They will always be Shirley’s pasties.”

June Patinkin----“Shirley, you were our dear friend and such a mainstay of the Guardians. You probably never knew how important you were to all of us, because you were much too modest, but you were such an eager participant, always with a smile and good humor. You made the work fun. You led the

way. Among the many activities in which I so well remember you were the wildflower walks with Elda Goodmiller at the Mississippi Palisades Park. I was terrified of heights and while everyone else was fearlessly tripping along, I was usually hanging back, being sure that I would fall down the cliff. But there you were, reassuring me that I could do it. And with your confidence, I did! And I will never forget the wonderful long walks we took all around the river impoundments just south of Savanna, admiring the white pelicans and trying to ID ducks. We had such a good time. Those were the days, Shirley, and I feel fortunate that I was able to share those experiences, and many others, with you. You will always be in our hearts and our memories.”

