



## Esther Lois Donley

March 16, 1937 - January 18, 2021

Esther Lois Donley, 83, of Kankakee passed away Monday. She was born March 16, 1937 in Bloomington, Illinois to Austin and Rosabelle Lindley. She married Donald Donley on June 8, 1957. They shared 63 years together. Surviving are her husband, daughter Kathy (Jim Wilkerson) of Albany, NY, her son Roger of Houston, TX, two granddaughters, Molly Wilkerson of Los Angeles, and Erin Wilkerson of Boston, five brothers, Russell of Glenview, her twin Lester (Letty) of Frankfort, Harold (Kay) of Morton, Robert (Jeanne) of Culcairn, New South Wales, Australia, Ray (Pearl) of Morris, one sister, Alice Determann of Wheeling, and one sister-in-law, Margaret Lindley of Chicago. She was preceded in death by her parents and three brothers Austin, Lyle and Kenneth Lindley.

Esther and Don met at Southern Illinois University where she earned her Bachelor's Degree in Education. As a lifelong learner, she earned a Master's Degree in Reading and another Master's in Library Science later in life. She took additional courses to qualify to teach high school English in Illinois. She taught in public schools in Missouri, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois from the elementary level through high school English, with first and second grades being her favorites.

From her beginnings in rural Illinois, she lived in Ghana, West Africa where she was connected to the Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu; and in Nairobi,

Kenya where she was librarian and first grade teacher at the West Nairobi School; and in Entebbe, Uganda where she taught first grade with Wycliffe Associates. She also taught first grade in Saudi Arabia where her husband was connected to a hospital.

An in-person, masked and socially-distanced worship service in celebration of her life will be held at the Manteno Church of the Nazarene at 10:00 on Friday, January 22, led by the Rev. Jack McCormick. The service will also be streamed over Zoom. Please contact a family member for the Zoom link. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations to the church.

Arrangements by Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JAN **22**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Manteno Church of the Nazarene  
698 N. Locust  
Manteno, IL 60950

# Tribute Wall

CO

“ To Don and all of Esther"s family, Please accept our prayers and sympathy. I cried when I heard the news, for we will miss Esther so Much! She was always a Blessing to see at Sunday School. Always there with a hug and kind words. Always encouraging , and taking an interest in us. We loved getting the cards in the mail that she and Don would send to us. What a loving, affectionate and caring lady!!! Our prayers are with you Don and family, for we know your loss is Great! Our consolation is that one day we will be united with Esther again! Love Dan and Claudia Olson

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**claudia olson** - January 23, 2021 at 06:36 PM

PS

“ Cousin Donnie, Cathy and Roger, sympathy and thoughts are being sent your way. Esther was the sweetest, kindest Lady, we didn't get together often, but she always asked about our Family, and always listened so intently. Prayers for each of you in the days ahead.

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**Patty (Donley) Sorenson** - January 23, 2021 at 12:42 PM

CA

“ We the freinds of your daughter  
HAPPY CHRISTINE in kenya are sharing your sadness and we extend our sympathies to you and your family Mr donley.  
May God give you peace that you seek.May our condolences bring you comfort and may our prayers ease the pain of your loss.  
The soul of our mother is at peace with our Heavenly Father.  
It is well Mr donley and your family...it is well  
Our condolences

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**Collins asena** - January 22, 2021 at 06:59 PM

HC

“ Dear Mum,I loved you but God loved you more.Thank you so much for everything and may the Good Lord put your soul in eternal peace.Have no much to say,its so painful Mum but for us to live is Christ and to die is gain.  
Rest in peace Mom 🙏🙏🙏🙏 and to my Dad,brother and sister and the entire family, lets be strong and keep praying so that God may comfort us during this sad and trying momments.  
My condolences.

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Happy Christine - January 22, 2021 at 06:45 PM

EW

“ My condolences to the entire family of Mr Donley, Cathy and Roger for the loss of Your lovely wife and mother respitevely. Have no words to express my sincere thanks to Esther Donley and her husband for making me be the person I am today,If it was not for them good education could be a non -existence experience in my life.A Kenyan bush girl now a mother who was empowered by Esther and motivated to be self sufficient ,and reliant.She made me to be the self I am today.I loved her but God loved her more.Rest in peace my sponsor, friend and a mother.

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Eddah Njoki wangundi - January 22, 2021 at 12:04 PM

KN

“ I have never known a more selfless, kinder, genuine, helpful, or patient soul! I was lucky enough to benefit from her love and wisdom as a new teacher at Thornridge High School, where she was the librarian. She retired after only a few years of me being there, but she still sent me motivational cards and notes. I felt her love, prayers, and encouragement despite not having her physical presence in the halls of school. Not only did she do so much for the kids, but also she was an inspiration for the staff, providing guidance, strength, and a positive word to help us endure the daily challenges that teaching can bestow. I especially remember the tremendous presentations that she used to give in honor of Black History Month. What a treasure it was for the students and me to have her relay her experiences while in Africa! She brought all sorts of African mementos and provided a slide show of all her pictures of daily life. How precious it is now for me to think about even the little details she included! Among many other things, I recall how she went from one slide of little monkeys, to the next slide which was a picture of her son, exclaiming, "And there's MY little monkey!" So sweet! I feel blessed to have known her for the short amount of time that I did. I will never forget her. A greater soul has never walked the halls of Thornridge...or the face of this earth, for that matter. Sending the family my deepest condolences, and thank you so much for sharing her with all of us! It is a comfort to know that she is up there in heaven on our side. - Kim Nylen

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**Kimberly Nylen** - January 22, 2021 at 10:30 AM

JR

“ I was so blessed to know this precious and sweet lady. I got to know her and Mr. Donley in the dining room. She was always so happy to be there and such a joy to help. She could always make a person feel better! My sympathies to your family!

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**Jean Rousey** - January 21, 2021 at 10:21 AM

TO

“ Aunt Esther was most definitely the quietest of the Lindley's but her presence was always felt. She oozed Love out of every pore of her body. She accomplished so much and was such a positive influence on so many people, but the only Pride I ever saw from her was the Pride she had for others. My Heart goes out to Kathy, Roger and Uncle Don as well as my Aunt and Uncles who have loss their sister. Aunt ester was a Treasure.

Teri (Lindley) Oesterle - January 21, 2021 at 09:36 AM

AB

“ Ashley B. lit a candle in memory of Esther Lois Donley



Ashley B. - January 21, 2021 at 09:25 AM

JN

“ Aunt Esther shared love with everyone she met. I will always remember her pinching my cheek and giving me a hug. She was always interested in finding out what was going on in your life and sharing updates about her family. I will miss her.



Julie Niemerg - January 20, 2021 at 07:48 PM

DD

“ Don, Kathy and Roger:

*I was terribly saddened to hear of "Mrs." Donley's passing. She was, without a doubt, one of the most beautiful people and soul's I've ever met. I will never forget her, truly.*

*She was such an incredible teacher, and specifically as it relates to my family, helped my family specifically through her patience and overwhelming love and support for her students. We would not be where we are today without her personal attention and dedication.*

*She always had wonderful things to say to me whenever we met, and she was always concerned about my family - wanting to know how they were. She was gracious and kind and grateful that I was her son's friend over the years. I'm grateful that she was her son's mother and a mother, in her way, to all of us.*

*It is my hope that these remembrances can help you all find some peace and comfort knowing how much she meant to the people she touched. My best wishes, sympathy and deepest condolences on her passing.*

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**Dave Ducat** - January 20, 2021 at 03:13 PM

DD

*'souls' - although I didn't put the apostrophe there in the first place.*

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**Dave Ducat** - January 20, 2021 at 03:14 PM

CS

“ 12 files added to the tribute wall



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**CAROLYN SMITH** - January 20, 2021 at 12:49 PM