



## Constance "Connie" Gray

Constance "Connie" Gray was born March 31, 1919, to John and Jessie (Dryer) Bestgen on the family farm north of Sturgis, SD. She passed into the next life on July 2, 2017, at the Sturgis Regional Senior Care Center.

The Valedictorian graduate, from St. Martin's Academy in Sturgis, went on to obtain her nursing degree from St. John's School

of Nursing in Rapid City in 1943.

While working as a nurse at St. John's Hospital, Connie met her future husband, Robert Gray, from Viewfield, SD. The couple married on October 17, 1945. To this union, six children were born: David, Charlie, Mary, Mark, Richard, and Anne.

Connie was known to many as "Dr. Massa's Nurse," having worked for the well-known area physician for more than 30-years. She was passionate about her profession and witnessed the evolution of nursing from the World War II era, to modern times as a nurse through the 1980's. During that time, she helped deliver the first baby in the Sturgis Community hospital more than 50 years ago, and cared for hundreds of Meade County folks. She and Dr. Massa were truly pioneer caregivers, providing medical care in rural areas for nothing more than a loaf of bread or a chicken.

Connie was instrumental in starting the Future Nurse's Club at the Sturgis High School and participated in the establishment of the Nurse Scholarship fund at the hospital.



After her retirement in the early 80's, she continued "service above self", as she provided foot care for hundreds through the years at the Sturgis Senior Center; She was a member of St. Francis Circle and on various committees at her home parish of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church; volunteered at the Ft. Meade Museum and the Jolley Funeral Home, and was a member of Kiwanis.

Connie and Robert loved to travel and enjoyed trips throughout the United States and beyond. One of their favorites was to the Holy Land in the early 70's. They both loved living at their ranch west of Sturgis, where they enjoyed the flowers, birds, and wildlife every day. Connie was an award winning and published cowboy poet and author of a book on Dr. L. L. Massa. She loved to play Scrabble, proving her extensive vocabulary was second only to her quick wit and delightful sense of humor.

She is survived by son, Charlie Gray (Cindy), Sturgis; daughters, Mary Neugebauer (Joel), Rapid City, and Annie Valades (Vance), Colorado Springs, CO; daughters-in-law, Julie Gray (Dave), Hill City, and Chris Gray (Rich), Coeur d'Alene, ID; brother, Philip Bestgen, Whitewood, SD; 14 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; many beloved nieces and nephews; and many special friends including Dr. George and Ellen Jenter, Sturgis.

Connie was preceded in death by her husband, Robert; sons, David, Mark, and Richard; parents, John and Jessie Bestgen; brothers, Leo and Steve Bestgen; sisters, Justine Bruch, Vonnie Bogner, Patricia McDermott, and Betty Bestgen.

Memorials in Connie's name may be sent to the Kinkade Funeral Chapel and can be designated toward the restoration of the St. Martin's Chapel, the St. Aloysius Cemetery, or for the Nurse's Scholarship Fund at the Sturgis Community Health Center.

Condolences may be sent to the family at [www.kinkadefunerals.com](http://www.kinkadefunerals.com).

*The family would like to invite you to join them for lunch in the church hall following committal. We thank you for your presence and condolences.*



*In Loving Memory Of*

## Constance "Connie" Gray

*1919 ~ 2017*



Bless, O Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
All our homes and all our cares,  
So that we, when God demands it,  
Bravely, ever cross may bear.

Bless us when the sun is shining  
And when clouds are bending low.  
Bless us when our joy is boundless  
And when tears of anguish flow.

## THOUGHTS OF A GRANDMOTHER

- Connie Gray

I'm sitting here just thinking  
And am filled with disbelief.  
My children are away from home.  
Their time with us was brief.  
I'd spent each day involved  
With each one's situations.  
Had shared with them traumatic griefs  
And, gladly, their elations!  
And now, that time is gone...  
But then, life did continue.  
After a prolonged lull  
We found our dreaded empty days  
In fact becoming full.  
Our children, bless collective hearts  
Themselves were having babies.  
Our longing for some little ones  
Became actual then, not maybe.  
And now, that time is here...  
Grandchildren are so wonderful.  
Our lives they've truly blest.  
We so enjoy their goings on,  
Their achievements, their conquests.  
They tolerate us old folks...  
Show care, excuse mistakes.  
Our hearts, with love, do nearly break.  
We think they are so great.  
We know full well, we shall not see  
Grandchildren growing old.  
But happiness they bring us now  
Is worth more than pure gold.  
We're grateful for their deep concern,  
Their care, their special bond.  
May we leave their world a better place  
When we seek the Great Beyond.



*In Loving Memory Of*

## **Constance “Connie” Gray**

### ***Born***

March 31, 1919  
Sturgis, SD

### ***Died***

July 2, 2017  
Sturgis, SD

### ***Vigil***

Wednesday, July 5, 2017, at 7:00 p.m.  
St. Martin's Chapel  
Sturgis, South Dakota

### ***Mass of Christian Burial***

Thursday, July 6, 2017, at 10:00 a.m.  
St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church  
Sturgis, South Dakota

### ***Celebrant***

Father Timothy Castor

### ***Accompanist***

Dr. Barry Furze

### ***Cantor***

Myron Volk

### ***Musical Selections***

“How Great Thou Art” “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”  
“Ave Maria”

### ***Pallbearers***

Helen Riedlinger ~ Betty Jorgenson ~ Bob Bruch  
Lynn Gray ~ Jon McDaniel ~ Dr. George Jenter

### ***Interment***

St. Aloysius Catholic Cemetery  
Sturgis, South Dakota