



## Dixie Cook

March 3, 1935 - July 10, 2025

Dixie Lee Cook (née Wilkes), age 90, passed away peacefully on July 10, 2025, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

Born on March 3, 1935, in Riceville, Iowa, Dixie lived a life marked by dedication to education, a passion for travel, and a deep love for her family. Dixie pursued her academic goals with determination and excellence. Her early education (k-8) started in a tiny one room schoolhouse (The David School) in Northern Iowa followed by her High School Diploma from Riceville, Iowa. She earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Upper Iowa University with majors in Education, English, and Reading. She later completed her Master's degree in Gifted Education at Southeast Missouri State University. Her commitment to learning laid the foundation for a remarkable career that would touch countless lives.

As an educator, Dixie was a pioneer in gifted education. She developed an exemplary gifted program at Cape Central Junior High School that gained statewide recognition and was recommended as the model for other schools across Missouri. Her innovative approach and unwavering commitment to student success made her a respected leader in the field.

Her influence extended beyond the classroom. Dixie was selected to join the Dorothy Sisk delegation to Russia, where she collaborated with directors and teachers in Moscow and Novosibirsk. She also spent time in Budapest exchanging ideas with educators and administrators, furthering international dialogue on gifted education.

One of the most tangible measures of her impact was her extraordinary record as a Knowledge Master coach. Under her guidance, her students achieved first place in the state of Missouri an astounding 14 times and claimed national first place honors four times-an achievement that speaks volumes about her mentorship and leadership.

Dixie's contributions were recognized through numerous accolades. In 1990, she was named "Most Influential Teacher" by the University of Missouri. In 1994, she was honored with the Mercedes Smith Scholarship Award from the Gifted Association of Missouri and inclusion in "Who's Who Among America's Teachers" She also served as a speaker for the Missouri State Teachers Association, sharing her insights and inspiring fellow educators across the state.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Dixie embraced life with enthusiasm and curiosity. She loved to travel and proudly visited all 50 states. Her journeys took her abroad both for pleasure and professional enrichment-a testament to her adventurous spirit and lifelong love of learning.

At home, Dixie found joy in gardening, sewing, knitting, crocheting, playing the organ, and bird watching. Bob and Dixie served as Presidents for Missouri Square & Round Dancers, traveling nationwide to represent Missouri. These hobbies reflected her creativity and appreciation for beauty in everyday life. Dixie was deeply devoted to her family. She is survived by her brothers, Milo Wilkes, Lyle (Barb) Wilkes; sister-in-laws, Joanne Wilkes, Margaret Cook, Judith Ripon; son, Rolland (Denise) Cook of Wytheville, Virginia; daughters, Julene (Edward) Thomas of Kokomo, Indiana and Lorene (Linard) Crites of Sedgewickville, Missouri; grandchildren, Phillip Lance Cook, Tonia (Chris) Kitts, Elizabeth (Julio) Ponce, Andrew (Starlet) Thomas, Kayla (Chris) Viars, Tyler Heafner; and many great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Dr. Robert Cook; parents, Ralph and Bernice Wilkes; brothers, Quentin Wilkes and Mayo Wilkes; sister-in-law, Judy Wilkes; and special friend, Dr. Charles Clark.

Dixie Lee Cook leaves behind a legacy of educational excellence, boundless curiosity, and enduring love for family. May her memory bring comfort to those who knew her and inspiration to those who follow in her footsteps.

A Memorial Service will be held on August 31, 2025 at Cornerstone Methodist Church, 308 Woodland Avenue, Riceville, Iowa.

Interment will immediately follow at Riverside Cemetery, Riceville, Iowa.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Michael J. Fox Foundation.

Online condolences may be made at [www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com](http://www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com)

Ford & Sons Funeral Home in Cape Girardeau, Missouri is in charge of arrangements.

# Cemetery Details

**Ford and Sons Cremation Center**

# Previous Events

## **Memorial Service**

**AUG 31** (CT)

Cornerstone Methodist Church  
308 Woodland Ave  
Riceville, IA 50466-7501  
(641) 985-2066

# Tribute Wall



“ Dixie and her cousin Neta who shared the March 3rd birthdate are running around in Heaven. My mother Neta adored Dixie. I remember going to the farm and seeing Dixie in beautiful dresses and making us kids treats. Then Roland taking us kids from CA to the cornfield to look for some kind of bird?... I loved it when Dixie moved close to me in California. She'd kept me straight on all the 1st, 2nd, and removed cousins. I wished I had written them down. She enjoyed going wine tasting in Napa with me, Julene and Julene's family. Fun Day. I am going to miss her. Roland, Julene and Lori I am so sorry for your loss.  
Yvonne Minnis

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**Yvonne Minnis** - October 13, 2025 at 08:19 PM

BH

“ Lori, Julene and Roland, Know that my heart will be with you on Sunday even though I can't make it. A donation has been made to the Michael J Fox Foundation in her honor.

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**Beth Hall** - August 28, 2025 at 05:05 PM

JT

Thank you so much for your donation. It is greatly appreciated and very kind of you to remember her. BTW your dad's wooden swing is still at the farm. I clean it and try to keep it oiled when I am around and it is still in great shape and safe to use. 😊

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**Julene Thomas** - September 11, 2025 at 09:34 PM

JW

“ Joann W. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Dixie Cook.



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**Joann W.** - August 27, 2025 at 12:25 PM

MG

“ I was very sorry to hear that Aunt Dixie passed away at ninety, after her long, brave battle with Parkinson's. I've made a gift to The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research in her honor. Her long life reflected the spirit of a devoted teacher—wise, thoughtful, and always seeking to understand things from every side. I'll never forget receiving her holiday letters each year; I think I still have all of them. They were filled with vivid details from the past year, and I always looked forward to reading them. Sending much love to everyone there and deep respect for all that you did to support her in these final years.

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**Monica Wilkes Grubbs** - August 02, 2025 at 09:38 AM

JT

I am sending you a thank you card using the address in my mom's old address book. Hope it is still valid 🙏

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**Julene Thomas** - September 11, 2025 at 09:30 PM

DE

“ Dawn Jay Alicia and Sierra Eltermann purchased the Serene Reflections Bouquet for the family of Dixie Cook.



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**Dawn Jay Alicia and Sierra Eltermann** - July 27, 2025 at 01:01 PM

DE

“ Dawn Jay Alicia and Sierra Eltermann planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dixie Cook.

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**Dawn Jay Alicia and Sierra Eltermann** - July 27, 2025 at 01:01 PM

LS

“ Dixie was such a wonderful inspiration to me at Central Jr High in Cape Girardeau, MO. So many of my students who were in her "Gifted Program" thrived because of her mentoring and understanding of their needs. Dr. Cook sent us (Science Education students) to observe Dixie's English Class. At the time I didn't understand how watching an English Class would help me with a biology class. I soon learned that the skill she had in classroom management would be the best lesson a future teacher could learn. We will miss her.

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**Linda Schild** - July 16, 2025 at 09:46 PM

CH

“ So sorry to hear of your loss. I helped her with the CJHS Scholar Bowl team for a couple of years and really enjoyed getting to know her better. My daughter was on the team came in first in the US. Her program was a god send for many bright kids.

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**CHERIE HENSON** - July 16, 2025 at 03:28 PM