



## JoDell Payne

January 23, 1940 - April 2, 2023

JoDell (Peterson) Payne passed away Sunday, April 2, 2023 at CountryHouse Residence in Kearney, NE. She was a bright light until the end, and now her days of fading memories and back pain are over. JoDell's wishes for cremation were honored. The celebration of Jo's life will be Wednesday, April 12, 2023, 11:00 am CDT, at Kearney First United Methodist Church, 4500 Linden Dr., Kearney, NE 68847. Luncheon to follow. The service will be live-streamed at <https://www.kearneyfirstumc.org/watch-online>.

JoDell was born January 23, 1940 in Farnam, NE to Mary E. (Jackson) Whittaker and James A. Whittaker (who resided in San Diego, CA). Her parents were estranged and later divorced. Mary remarried in August 1946 to Arthur R. Peterson of Holdrege, NE who joyfully made JoDell his own, officially adopting her in 1947. Jo called him 'Daddy' until the end of her days. Later, she would become the big sister for two siblings.

She was embraced by the large extended Peterson family residing in the Holdrege / Kearney area and far beyond, while the ties to her mother's side of the family remained constant. A much younger Peterson cousin remembers JoDell as this beautiful, older girl who was glad to make time for a little kid like her. Jo often said that Holdrege was the best place in the world to grow up.

JoDell descended from a long line of strong-willed, capable, and caring

women. As was her mother, Jo's beloved maternal grandmother Lena Conover Jackson of Farnam (and later Holdrege) was one of those strong women.

Grandma Jackson, who always called her oldest granddaughter 'Jody,' was her greatest role model. Even after Jody moved from Farnam to Holdrege in 1946, she visited her grandmother regularly. Among many things, Grandma Jackson taught her to have faith, sew, bake cookies, grow flowers, and be kind.

JoDell loved music and played the piano. Neil Diamond and Barry Manilow were two of her favorite artists. She loved to dance, too.

As a youngster and teen, she was outgoing, pretty and very popular with classmates and adults alike. Before graduating from Holdrege High School in 1957, JoDell was a good student, majorette and pep club member. She worked at Hested's dime store Thursday nights and Saturdays.

JoDell worked a year to earn money towards tuition, and in 1958 went to Kearney State College for a two-year teaching certificate, the standard at the time. She was a member of the Chi Omega sorority and majorette with the marching band.

That spring, at the insistence of his best buddies, John W. Payne called JoDell—a girl he didn't know—and asked her to be his date to his fraternity's spring formal. She said yes.

Jo and John married at the Holdrege United Methodist Church on hot and steamy July 31, 1960. Her sister was the flower girl.

The couple lived in Kearney where John finished college and then went into

business with his father at Payne Larson Furniture. JoDell taught second graders at Whittier Elementary School for two years.

Teaching gave way to stay-at-home mom with the arrival of three daughters in 1962, 1964 and 1966, followed by a son in 1971. JoDell excelled at motherhood and making a home for her family. John was the family's breadwinner, but Jo was its engineer. She also supported and encouraged John's business interests and civic engagements.

She was a good cook and baker who liked to try new recipes. She loved to entertain.

In 1989, a friend presented Jo with a brag book that would hold multiple photos of her first grandchild, a sweet boy. Tragically in 1999, that same little boy and his grandparents would grieve the loss of his mother and their oldest daughter. Jo and John became parents again to raise their grandson to become the fine man he is today.

JoDell volunteered as a Brownie leader, Cub Scout den mother and room mother. She was involved with her sorority as an alumna.

For decades, she was passionate about The P.E.O. Sisterhood (Philanthropic Educational Organization) and its focus on providing educational opportunities for female students worldwide, serving as president for two chapters. And, JoDell was past board chair of the Kearney Country Club.

In service of her alma mater, the University of Nebraska at Kearney (formerly Kearney State College), Jo was past president of the UNK Alumni Association, and later chaired its campaign to purchase the Alumni House. JoDell and John helped furnish the House after it was acquired and

renovated. In September 2013, the couple were co-recipients of the Jim Rundstrom Distinguished Service Award.

Jo enjoyed spending time with her friends and she loved to travel, too, but never mastered the art of packing light.

Topsail Beach, NC was Jo's happy place. Vacations with all the kids and grandkids were among her favorite memories.

JoDell's life was well lived.

JoDell's survivors include her husband John of Kearney, daughters Linda Payne Kitt (Ron) of Kearney, Nancy Payne (Ben Goodkind) of Arlington, VA, and son Steven Payne (Lauren) of Jacksonville, NC; grandchildren Colby Payne (Pam) of Virginia Beach, VA, Noah Goodkind of Olympia, WA, Sam Goodkind of San Francisco, CA, Joshua and Rebekah Payne of Jacksonville, Cara Kitt Mullins (Pat) of Omaha, NE, Cory and Erin Kitt of Kearney; great-granddaughter Penelope Payne of Virginia Beach; sister Cynthia Peterson of Lincoln, NE; sister-in-law Cheryl Peterson of Lincoln, brother- and sister-in-law Ron and Nita Payne and sister-in-law Marian Payne of Kearney; special friend-sister Ketty Rodriques Moro of Toronto, Canada; several nephews and nieces, cousins and close friends.

Family members preceding her in death are her daughter Ann Payne, parents Arthur and Mary Peterson, brother Robert Peterson, great-grandfather Nick Conover, grandparents Archie Jackson and Lena Jackson, parents-in-law Ruth (Sherer) and Alvie Payne, brother-in-law Charles Payne, all of her aunts and uncles, and many cousins.

In lieu of flowers, memorials to the University of Nebraska Foundation, P.E.O. Chapter GG (Kearney, NE), Kearney First United Methodist Church , or to the

family (in care of the funeral home) for later designation.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

APR **12**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

First United Methodist Church  
4500 Linden Drive  
Kearney, NE 68847

# Tribute Wall

KH

“ *JoDell was a vital part of the Kearney community. I enjoyed working with her on many projects. I send my kindest thoughts of sympathy for this loss to your family. Kay Horner (Mrs. Jack, Sr.)*

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**Kay Horner** - April 12, 2023 at 08:36 AM

GL

“ *We want to extend our deepest sympathy to John and the Payne family. We were so sorry to hear of JoDell's passing. She was a beautiful lady, kind and caring. We hope your memories of her will be a comfort to you during this difficult time. Gene and Linda Liebig*

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**Gene and Linda Liebig** - April 11, 2023 at 11:39 PM

MM

“ Dear John,

*Ruth and I were deeply saddened to learn over the weekend of JoDell's passing. She was a wonderful woman and made numerous contributions to the Kearney community, the University of Nebraska, the state of Nebraska, and society overall. Ruth and I truly enjoyed our interactions with her at events, organized meetings, and one on one conversations. She will be deeply missed by a large number of individuals.*

*JoDell was an outstanding individual, and one we considered to be a personal friend. In addition to the great loss that you and your family members have suffered in JoDell's passing, many other people and associates have also sustained a tremendous loss. As you know, Jo was a highly respected individual and an exceptionally talented person. I am certain that you have many pleasant memories of your times together, and we trust that your sorrow and loneliness will be lessened by knowing that you also have an enormous number of caring friends who share in your bereavement.*

*We would certainly like to have been with you for Jo's memorial services, but I am having surgery on Thursday and the doctors want me to be lowkey on Wednesday. Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. Best personal regards.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Martin A. Massengale  
President, Chancellor, Founding Director and  
Foundation Distinguished Professor Emeriti*

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**Martin Massengale** - April 11, 2023 at 12:00 PM

MM

“ On behalf of the Moylan family, please accept our sincere condolences for the loss of Jo. Our parents, Jim and Lila Moylan, enjoyed many good times with John and Jo through the years when John and our Dad served on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. Our Mom really connected with Jo's fun and delightful personality and enjoyed their time together. Many fond memories of the Payne's and Moylan's. Rest in Peace.

Michael Moylan - April 07, 2023 at 07:08 PM

GV

“ We were so sorry to read about Jo's passing. We had wonderful times with her and John going on Nebraska football trips and staying at each other's homes, especially when our kids were young. She was always upbeat and had a smile on her face. Jo was a wonderful hostess, friend, mother and wife. Our deepest sympathy goes to John, her children and grandchildren. Irv and Gail

Gail Veitzer - April 07, 2023 at 02:17 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of JoDell Payne.



April 07, 2023 at 10:26 AM

KB

“ As one of my best friends in high school I remember JoDell as a friendly, fun and supportive friend. We had many good times together at slumber parties and on double dates. God's blessings on her soul and on her loved ones.

*Karen Perry Baker*

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**Karen Baker** - April 06, 2023 at 10:47 PM

SM

“ I am so saddened about the passing of my long time friend. JoDell and I went through grade school and high school in Holdrege. We had so many good times together, and she will be missed by many. Rest in peace, my friend.

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**Sharlene Ferris Meyer** - April 05, 2023 at 06:50 PM

KC

“ Jodell was always the perfect host when I would come and visit from California. May she rest in peace.

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**Ken Conner** - April 05, 2023 at 12:24 AM

DB

“ To JoDell's family: I met JoDell through P.E.O. when she began her service on the Nebraska Cottey College Committee many years ago. We spent many an hour and overnight as we both served on this committee. She was a dear soul and just a tad spunky! Her lively spirit will be missed my many who knew her through P.E.O. Thoughts and prayers are with all of you!

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**Dori Bush** - April 04, 2023 at 04:55 PM

KK

“ I have many fond memories of spending time with my cousins, the Petersons' and the Paynes' both in Kearney and at Holdrege and the wonderful meals with them all. Linda, Nancy, Steve, Colby, John, and family you're all in my thoughts and prayers. Love, Karen Kammann



Karen Kammann - April 04, 2023 at 12:53 PM

DR

“ John and all: Learned of Jodell's death a few minutes ago. Our sympathy and God's blessings. Ron and Berdeen (Kenfield) Roemmich

Dr. Ron and Berdeen Roemmich - April 04, 2023 at 01:11 AM

PJ

Dear John and family. I am so very sorry to learn about JoDell. She was always so much fun to be around. If I close my eyes I can still hear her laughter. I am lifting you up with prayers of strength and love. Patty Jensen

Patricia A Jensen - April 06, 2023 at 02:18 PM

DB

Dear John and family. I am so sorry to hear of JoDell's death. What fun we had in college. It was so good to see her at our last reunion at your house.

Dianne K Brown - April 07, 2023 at 08:34 AM

KJ

*Dear Payne family,*

*I was so saddened to learn of JoDell's passing on Sunday. We enjoyed many fun times as the Kearney High School football team's 'food moms' back in 2006 when Colby and Jarrett were juniors and KHS won the Class A State Championship. Riding to games with John and JoDell and cheering on our boys will always be a special memory. I believe Jo has gone to a beautiful place of rest now that her days on earth have come to an end. Her brightness will continue to shine on all those who knew and loved her.*

*Kathleen Johnston*

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**Kathleen Johnston** - April 12, 2023 at 11:55 AM