



Sharon Kay Metz

09/13/1934 - 06/19/2020

Sharon Kay Metz passed away peacefully on June 19, 2020, in Oshkosh. Born in Winneconne on September 13, 1934, Sharon was the only child of Henry and Elfrieda Wiesner.

She grew up a tomboy – fishing, tending traps, exploring the woods and skiing the marshes on the Wiesner farm and fishing resort. Sharon attended a one-room schoolhouse at which she and her first cousins often accounted for half the student body. In 1952 she graduated from Winneconne High School.

That's also the year Sharon married Thomas Metz, starting a remarkable partnership that would last nearly 68 years. In addition to Tom, she is survived by sons Michael (Janet Benson) of Sun City West, AZ, Mark (Diana) of Wauwatosa, Mitchell (Rosemary) of Oconomowoc, and Matthew (Aleathea Johnson) of Minneapolis. She is also survived by adoring grandchildren Casey (Tommasina Miller), Logan, Trevor, Emma, Fletcher, Ellie, Henry, Charlie and Alaina, as well as special friends Hannah Goreta, Oliver and Ava Schlegel and Sarah Binder.

After Tom left the army, the two lived in Oshkosh, Appleton and Green Bay, raising their four boys. It was in Green Bay that Sharon began a career in community activism, working as a VISTA volunteer and program assistant for four years. Her concerns with helping the underprivileged led her to run in 1974 as a Democratic candidate for the Wisconsin State Assembly against a long-term Republican incumbent. She won, and was re-elected five more times. During her 12 years in the Assembly, Sharon championed the rights of children, the environment, and especially Native Americans. She became only the second woman to serve on the state's powerful Joint Finance Committee.

In 1986, Sharon was the Democratic candidate for Lieutenant Governor, running with the incumbent governor Tony Earl. Although that election didn't end the right way, Sharon brushed herself off and found other ways to continue the fight for social justice. She and Tom moved to Milwaukee, where Sharon served as Executive Director of Lutheran Human Rights Association of America for the next four years.

In 1990, Sharon founded Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights (HONOR), a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting American Indian rights and educating the public on issues of importance to the Native community.

Under her guidance as HONOR's Executive Director, Sharon was able to organize a national Native-rights advocacy network, bringing in strong non-Indian support to stand with the tribes on many issues, including treaty rights, team mascots, religious freedom, gaming, and the protection of burial and sacred sites. Tom worked side-by-side with her on HONOR matters,

developing his own specialty and recognition as a seller of authentic Native-themed literature.

In 1995, Sharon and Tom moved back to the Winneconne farm of her birth and childhood, where she began to keep and ride horses at the age of 61. The couple continued to work with HONOR and publish the HONOR Digest for many more years. Sharon only “retired” around 2006, after more than 35 years of social activism. In 2015, she and Tom moved to an assisted living apartment in Oshkosh, where Sharon enjoyed frequent visits with family and friends.

The family will hold a private memorial service for Sharon, and in the fall her ashes will be scattered near a Meskwaki archaeological site on the family farm. A public visitation will be held at Mueller Funeral Home 904 E. Main St. Winneconne on Wednesday, July 1, 2020, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm. Due to COVID, facemasks and social distancing will apply.

In lieu of flowers or memorials, the family suggests donations in Sharon’s name to Heifer International.

If you wish please submit online condolences to [muellerfh.net](https://www.muellerfh.net).