



## Shirley M. Olson

November 4, 1930 - May 26, 2025

In Loving Memory of Shirley Mae Olson  
November 4, 1930 - May 26, 2025

Longtime Benicia resident Shirley Olson is now in heaven with her Savior.

Born on November 4th, 1930, in Vallejo, California, she graduated from Vallejo High School in 1948, alongside the love of her life, Don Olson. They married in 1950, soon moving to neighboring Benicia before welcoming son Rick in 1951 and daughter Lynn in 1952.

Shirley raised her children in Benicia, where she happily embodied the role of “stay-at-home mom” well before the term even existed. At their first home on Hillcrest Avenue, she painted the interior pink - AND the exterior. (Apparently many American wives did so at that time in a nod to the favorite color of First Lady Mamie Eisenhower.)

She was involved in numerous aspects of her children’s lives, active in Benicia Little League as well as Boy Scouts den mother and PTA president. When her kids reached high school, she headed back to school at Vallejo Junior College. She then transferred to Cal Berkeley, majoring in sociology and psychology, graduating as her children were in college themselves. She was a

social worker in Solano County for three years before embarking on a new career: After attending travel agency school in San Francisco, she proceeded to open Benicia Travel Agency in the late 1970s.

Shirley embraced life on every front. She was humble, friendly, kind to all, and the most gracious host, with every detail perfectly planned and presented. Her innate heart for welcoming brought others in: As one friend put it, "Shirley radiated warmth and hospitality."

When she loved something, she devoted herself to it for decades. She played along to Jeopardy! nightly, keeping score with pen in hand. Brought to sports fandom by her passionate husband and son, she rooted for her local Giants, Warriors, and 49ers year in and year out.

By far, her greatest joy was her family. She had four granddaughters whom she loved and adored as their protector and biggest fan. She mastered the role of spoiling the grandkids - and later, the great grandkids - repeatedly assuring them "You can do what-EV-er you want," whether that empowered them to order off a dinner menu or choose their college major.

Her children and grandchildren considered her the greatest mom and "Tutu". They remember her fondly as a lover of list-making, meticulously organized with a highly calibrated fashion sense. In their minds, the color blue will never live apart from this lady; she embraced it in every way, from her wardrobe down to the carpet on the floor. Hers was a home that they were always excited to enter.

Her greatest love was her husband, Don, who preceded her in death in 2017. The two of them traveled extensively through the years, often with treasured friends, and often to their favorite destination, Hawaii.

They were quietly, yet staunchly generous in their love for the community. As charter members of Heritage Presbyterian Church in 1981, they persevered in their philanthropy efforts toward their church home and others throughout the years.

Don and Shirley's marriage, their joy, their mutual love for one another, was evident to everyone. This relationship was especially impactful to their granddaughters, who held it as their ideal. Each sought out and found in her respective mate a man whom they could love and cherish forever as their Tutu loved their "Papa".

Shirley is survived by son Rick and his wife Marilynne; daughter Lynn Pettigrew; granddaughters Marisa (Andrew) Coleman, Summer (Bryan) Stubblefield, Jillian (Douglas) Sanchez, and Hayley (Michael) Bauder; and several great-grandchildren.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Don; mother, Edith; sisters, Jackie and Fran; and son-in-law, Gary Pettigrew.

A Celebration of Life will be held Friday, July 18th, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. at Passalacqua Funeral Chapel, 901 West 2nd Street, Benicia, California.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JUL 18. 11:00 AM (PT)

Passalacqua Funeral Chapel  
901 W Second Street  
Benicia, CA 94510  
(707) 745-3130  
info@passalacquafuneralchapel.com  
<https://www.passalacquafuneralchapel.com>

# Tribute Wall

BB

“ Shirley and Don were dear friends of our parents. Dad built Don's real estate office. And Shirley and Mama were 2 of 8 ladies in their Benicia Lunch Group who for years celebrated each of their birthday's in a different town for lunch and shopping. Shirley, so petite, with so much vivaciousness, smartly dressed and always with a smile. They are now together having their martini's in the heavens.

*Beverley and Jeanette Siri*



---

**Beverley Siri Borelli** - July 23, 2025 at 02:04 PM

SK

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



---

**Sandy Kirkpatrick** - July 18, 2025 at 07:22 PM



“ 105 files added to the album *LifeTributes*



---

Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - July 09, 2025 at 02:34 PM