



## Gayle Ruth Willey

July 31, 1946 - January 7, 2026

Gayle Ruth Willey died peacefully on January 7, 2026. Gayle was born to Ruth and Earl Birkemeyer in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota on July 31, 1946.

Gayle grew up on the family farm in Brown County. She graduated from Mankato State College in 1967 and worked as a teacher. Later, she moved to the Twin Cities and became a successful businesswoman at Honeywell. Although she lived in the cities, her true home was the farm and her love for it never faded. Gayle was a talented textile artist. Together with her husband Doug, she created State Fair award-winning quilts. Her artistic style was creative, bold and colorful. She enjoyed creating loving memories with her family and friends, and loved to travel. Gayle was also naturally generous. Her greatest gift was teaching us how to have fun. She was unfailingly playful, mischievous, and happy. We will always cherish her and remember her with a huge smile.

She was preceded in death last April by her beloved husband of 57 years, Doug Willey, her parents, and her brothers Roger Birkemeyer and Bruce Birkemeyer. Gayle is survived by her brother Glenn Birkemeyer and his wife Karen, and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews, along with many loving friends.

A Visitation at 1:00, followed by a Celebration of Life at 2:00, will be held on

June 16, 2026, at the North Mankato Mortuary - Northview, 2060 Commerce Dr, North Mankato, MN 56003.

Memorials are preferred to the non-profit of your choice.