

Joanne Helmts, 67

May 26, 1940 - Oct. 26, 2007

AVOCA — Joanne Frances (Benning) Helmts was born May 26, 1940, in Ackley, daughter of Fred and Frances (Schmidt) Benning, and was one of three children in the family. She attended country school and in 1958, she graduated from Geneva High School in Geneva. Following high school, Joanne attended Dental Assistant School in St. Paul, MN and then worked as a dental assistant for a year in Des Moines.

Joanne married Earl Warren Griffen in 1960 at St. Peters United Church of Christ in Geneva. They were the parents of five sons: Richard, Leon, Donald, Rodney and Fred. She was a housewife.

Joanne married Norman Helmts Feb. 6, 1990, in Denison, and they lived in various towns, including Harlan and Atlantic, before moving to Avoca in 1992. Although she took drivers ed while in high school, she never drove, however, she helped deliver newspapers. Since 2001 when she had a stroke and other health problems, including heart surgery, she has been limited in her activities but she was improving. She died Oct. 26, 2007, at Myrtue Medical Center at age 67 years and five months.

Joanne was preceded in death by her parents and a sister, LaDonna Benning. She is survived by her husband, Norman Helmts of Avoca; her sons: Richard Griffen (Michelle) of Carson; Leon Griffen and Donald Griffen, both living in Shelby; Rodney Griffen (Angie) of Mounds View, MN; and Fred Griffen (Anne) of Avoca; a step-daughter, Christina Berry (Richard); and a step-son, Kevin Helmts, all of Hazel Green, AL; her brother, Norman Benning (Delores) of Hampton; 17 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and other relatives.

Memorial services were held Nov. 1, 2007, at the United Church of Avoca with Pastor Nancy Ross-Hullinger officiating. Honorary bearers were Sandy Stormer, Barb Befort, Donna Murray, Tamera Ploen, Carol Fox, Marilyn Fritz and Lori Teachout. Private family inurnment was held at the Atlantic Cemetery. Pauley Jones Funeral Home in Avoca, in charge of arrangements.