

Named Endowed Funds

The Shirley and George Oakes Family Fund



George and Shirley Oakes were born and raised in New Lisbon, Wisconsin; moved to Cloquet in 1953; built their first home on Jasper Street in 1958 and lived in Cloquet for more than 30 years.

George Oakes was a chemical engineer who began his career in 1953 at Northwest Paper (and later the Potlatch Corporation.) In high school, George was valedictorian of his class and a top athlete who lettered in four sports; setting track records that weren't broken for many years. George served in the United States Navy and then earned his bachelor's degree from Northwestern University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

After moving to Cloquet George was active in the Masons, Blue Lodge, Eastern Star, and was involved in the youth hockey program. He loved fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, hiking, bike riding and traveling.

Shirley attended Viterbo College and St. Francis School of Nursing in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and then graduated from the College of St. Francis in Joliet, Illinois with a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Arts in 1980. She worked at the Raiter Hospital and Community Memorial Hospital as a registered nurse. She taught nursing assistance classes at vocational schools in Cloquet, Esko and Duluth. In addition to her busy nursing career, Shirley was also active in Eastern Star and Friday Club. She and George also participated in the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and were active members of the Presbyterian Church.

George and Shirley have four children, Steven, Curtiss, David and Jolene; all of whom graduated from Cloquet High School. All four children were honor students, class officers, athletes, involved in the arts, theater and musicals.

Steven continued his education at Dartmouth, earned his doctorate from the Mayo Clinic and University of Minnesota in pharmacology and now teaches at the University of Wisconsin Madison.

Curtiss graduated from Platteville University and University of Minnesota, Duluth with a degree in criminal justice and sociology.

David graduated from Gustavus Adolphus and the University of Minnesota. He is now a mechanical engineer residing in Hermantown, Minnesota.

Jolene, who now lives in Ham Lake, Minnesota, graduated from Hamline University with a

degree in Psychology.

In 1986, after George took early retirement; he and Shirley spent the next 15 years traveling through the United States and eventually to several other countries. Sadly, George passed away in February 2001. Although she still misses her “best friend,” Shirley is comforted by the feeling that she and George had a good marriage and created many good memories.

Shirley decided to create this endowed family fund within the Cloquet Educational Foundation because of two dearly held wishes. According to Shirley, one of George’s wishes was to create a positive difference in children’s education. And Shirley wanted to create a living memorial that will be around longer than she and George.

“George and I learned that good educational opportunities can make all the difference in someone’s life,” said Shirley. “We feel fortunate that we were able to live somewhere where we could be involved in the community and where our children would receive wonderful educations. Cloquet was our home and it holds an important place in our heart. Starting this endowed fund seemed like the perfect way to honor our lives here.”