

Arlene Gayle David

In a 2012 picture on display for years in Arlene David's house in Wahpeton, she is surrounded by her four daughters on a Detroit Lakes beach, the group's five smiles peeking out amidst a web of ten arms clutching tightly to each other. It was in this same way—surrounded by her daughters, several grandchildren, and at least a dozen loving hands—that Arlene Gayle David left this world on Sunday, May 29, 2022. She was 89 years old.

Such scenes illustrate the life and the legacy that Arlene both generated and leaves behind: warmth, togetherness, support, and unwavering love for family and friends. And so many gigantic hugs.

Born on October 28, 1932, Arlene was the youngest of three children and the only girl of Evelyn and Severin Nelson, named for her mother's youngest sister.

Articulate and quick-witted, Arlene, who was raised on a farm near Cayuga, N.D., took to education early. She recalled making her way, rain or shine, to a one-room school not unlike some haphazard butterfly, admitting to her daughters recently that “On lovely spring days, and fall days it took me longer because I sometimes took the slow path by the river and through lots of trees. I found it interesting to see what was happening in nature.”

Arlene later ended up teaching in the very same school to which she had flittered so many times, and later earned a certificate from what was then the North Dakota State School of Science in Wahpeton.

In the early-1950s, she met Gordon Otto David at a dance in Lidgerwood. A separation precipitated by Gordon's deployment to Korea notwithstanding, the two found each other again as their courtship blossomed into a nearly 50-year relationship. The two married at Immanuel Lutheran Church in rural DeLamere, N.D., on April 25, 1959, despite the ribbing Arlene took from her brother and “best friend” Bob Nelson that a Saturday evening wedding meant that he “would miss Gunsmoke.” The pair honeymooned in Duluth, Minn., before settling in Wahpeton, N.D.

Arlene's daughters Lonna (Kevin) Skoog, Julene (Paul) Griffin, Andrine (John) Evers, and Robin David (Brian Schill) provided her with 12 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. The matriarch of a large and overwhelmingly loving family, Arlene leaves a legacy of welcoming, playfulness, and an unrivaled generosity of spirit that saw her cheering louder than anyone else for her family's accomplishments, from her grandchildren's athletic events or music recitals to her son-in-law's punk rock band.

All this only scratches the surface of Arlene's story, of course, which includes a long tenure at a Wahpeton bank and role as deputy clerk of the Richland County Court and District Court in Wahpeton.

She was preceded in death by her parents, husband Gordon, brothers Bob and Glenn Nelson, son-in-law John Evers, and grandchild Solomon David-Schill.

When asked recently what advice she would like to give her great-grandchildren, a typically humble Arlene first insisted that she was hardly “qualified to give advice” to any generation. But she agreed to try. “Your grandparents love you so much,” she proclaimed finally. “You maybe notice that they smile so big when you do things with them. Great-grandparents love you too and always love to see you. We also love your hugs!” It's those grand hugs from a remarkable woman that we already miss.



Gone From My Sight

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship, at my side,
spreads her white sails to the moving breeze and starts
for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength.
I stand and watch her until, at length, she hangs like a speck
of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then, someone at my side says, "There, she is gone."

Gone where?

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast,
hull and spar as she was when she left my side.
And, she is just as able to bear her load of living
freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me -- not in her.

And, just at the moment when someone says, "There, she is gone,"
there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices
ready to take up the glad shout, "Here she comes!"

And that is dying...



In Loving Memory of

Arlene G. David

Born

October 28, 1932 - Sargent County, North Dakota

Passed Away

May 29, 2022 - Breckenridge, Minnesota

Age

89 Years 7 Months 1 Day

Funeral Service

11:00 AM - Monday, June 6, 2022
Bethel Lutheran Church - Wahpeton, North Dakota

Officiant

Pastor Tom Peterson

Pianist

Lindsay Auwarter

Special Music

Elias David-Schill

Congregational Hymns

"Precious Lord, Take My Hand" - "Because He Lives" - "Amazing Grace"

Pallbearers

Arlene's Grandchildren

Interment

Fairview Memorial Gardens - Wahpeton, North Dakota

Vertin-Munson Funeral Home - Wahpeton, ND

Funeral Directors: Whitney Demarais and Shanna Grumbles - www.vertinmunson.com