

# Remembrance

## **JEANNE ARDIS SORENSEN**

**DECEMBER 14, 1931-  
FEBRUARY 24, 2021**



Jeanne Ardis Nielsen was born to Ralph and Frieda Nielsen in Harlan, Iowa on December 14, 1931 and passed to her heavenly home on February 24, 2021.

Jeanne's early years were filled with many great adventures on the family farm with her sister Lona and brothers Don, David, and Stan. She often steered their bicycle over the rolling hills to their one room schoolhouse, Jackson #2, with one of her siblings riding on the front handlebar and one on the back of the bike.

After graduating as valedictorian from Harlan High school in 1949, she arrived at Dana College that summer, working toward a degree in elementary education. Two years of college qualified her to teach in Iowa's rural elementary schools, first at a one-room country school, then Irwin, and Harlan. She finished her degree by making the 65-mile one-way trip to Dana College each Saturday and many summer mornings to take classes, receiving her bachelor's degree from Dana 23 years later, summa cum laude as salutatorian of the 1972 class.

Jeanne met Connie at Lake Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp when they were 14 years old during a Luther League camp, and eventually they married on September, 26, 1953 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Iowa. They were married 63 years.

They spent their first years of marriage in Des Moines, Iowa where Jeanne worked for Lutheran Social Services and where their two sons Mark and Paul were born. In 1959 they moved to the Jacksonville area and eventually settled on the family farm where Jeanne grew up.

While her life was full with farm work and housework, teaching school, singing in the Bethlehem Lutheran Choir and leading Luther League, she also loved organizing family vacations and attending many local concerts and sporting events. Jeanne helped establish and manage the Mustard Seed Christian Book Store in Harlan for several years. Her hobbies included reading, watching sports, remodeling the house, travel and baking. (Her Christmas coffee cakes and chocolate pies were loved by many.) Along the way, she showed a unique compassion for those who felt lonely, hurting or in need of hospitality. Jeanne also served on the Board of Directors of Mexico Mission International.

In the fall of 1976, Jeanne and Connie accepted the role as co-directors of Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp for 17 years and then served part-time for another 13 years when their son Mark was the director. As an outgrowth of the camp ministry Jeanne organized an annual quilt auction and created a travel program for adults, which took the couple and many others across the nation and even to Israel. One year Jeanne was asked to serve as interim director of Riverside Bible Camp in Story City, Iowa, and now that camp is thriving. Many camp counselors have expressed their appreciation for Jeanne's investment in their lives; and Ingham-Okoboji camp has been recognized for its emphasis on youth, family and senior adult programs. Jeanne composed a book that recounts the 90 year history of the camp. Her favorite pastime at the camp was welcoming and serving coffee to all who visited.

In recent years, Jeanne enjoyed retirement in Arizona and involvement in the Fiesta Club at Community Church of Joy and the Legacy group at Hope Church where her son Paul is pastoring. For many summers she and Connie travelled back to Okoboji to volunteer at the camp. She loved visits with her friends and family, especially her grandchildren and enjoyed playing scrabble, dominoes, puzzles and other games.

Jeanne is preceded in death by parents Ralph and Frieda Nielsen and brothers Don and Stanley Nielsen. She is survived by her husband Connie, sister Lona (late Fred 'Skip) Louis, brother David (Sandy) Nielsen, sister-in-law Cheryl Nielsen, children Mark (Tonya) and Paul (Carol); grandchildren Tedra (Luke) Jorgensen, Gavin, Briele, David (Desirae), Nathan (Lana) and April; and great-grandchildren Austin, Trista, Silas, Finnegan, and Anna Eleise.

A memorial service followed by a reception was held for Jeanne at Hope Church Phoenix on Sunday, March 14th at 3:00 pm. 26525 North 19th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

A memorial service will also be held at Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp in Iowa on Saturday, July 3rd at 10:00 am. Memorial gifts may be given to Ingham Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, 1203 Inwan Street, Milford, Iowa 51351. [www.okoboji.org](http://www.okoboji.org). or 1-800-OKOBOJI.