



Arlene Katherine Alexander

February 10, 1920 - June 4, 2013

Arlene Katherine Alexander, 93, passed away June 4 in Vancouver, Wash. The wise-cracking, wide-eyed Nebraska farm girl spent 62 years married to Raymond Alexander, most of it in Portland. Arlene started life in Bloomfield, Neb., on the Schmeckpeper farm, parents Fred and Kate having been the children of German immigrant farmers. The precocious Arlene was the family's youngest child and was described as "such a nice little girl" in a letter she kept from her teacher when she was 8. That was the year her family moved to nearby Norfolk, where she lived into her 20s. She was deeply involved with Christ Lutheran Church in Norfolk and active in the Walther League, a Lutheran youth organization. She got first billing in a stage comedy put on by the league at the church's school hall, and she must have been something to see playing, as the handbill describes, the matriarch running a small tourist hotel in Central Europe. At home, the family hung a "Room & Board" sign from the front porch and took in boarders to make ends meet during the Great Depression. She wrote on a photo from that era, "Jobs and money were hard to come by." But there were other ways to pass the time -- at 18, she was featured in a newspaper story as the volunteer scoreboard keeper at the local ballpark. Just a few years later, During World War II, she would go to work for that paper, in the Norfolk Daily News' production department. A letter from its superintendent called her "a lady of the highest character, a diligent and conscientious worker." Her brother worked a stint in the Northwest with the Civilian Conservation Corps, and his tales of the

forests, streams and mountains sold her on her own giant leap, so she left for Portland at the start of 1945. She was apparently happy with the decision, because her old pastor mentioned in a letter that "we are happy to know that you like it out west, but we hope to see you in Norfolk some time again." (She would return to visit Nebraska one day with her children.) Ray met green-eyed Arlene after the war, living in a rented room of his extended family's own Portland home. A Missouri native, he'd served in the Army and was wounded in Europe just after crossing into Germany with Gen. Patton's forces. The couple married in 1947 and got started right away raising three children in northeast Portland. After two decades spent rearing the kids, Arlene took a clerk-typist job at the Bonneville Power Administration in 1966. She worked there 15 years, earning two promotions and was eventually in charge of distributing engineering documents (before e-mail) and maintaining vital files. When she retired from the Department of Energy post in 1982, the administrator said in a letter that her accurate and timely performance "contributed greatly to fulfillment of division engineering responsibilities." In a note to her co-workers, she wrote: "Thank you, each and every one of you. You made me so happy." She may have been happy there, but she always seemed happiest when singing hymns at Trinity Lutheran Church with her choir-veteran voice. She also made a heck of an apple pie, and her loved ones can hardly remember a time when she wasn't in the middle of something in the kitchen. For her three grandchildren, she was the poster grandma: Affectionate, round-cheeked, funny and full of false threats to "poke you right in the nose" if one stepped out of line. When she and Ray hit their golden years, they packed up their lives, emptying the old, green house on NE 40th Ave. and heading down to Las Vegas. They joined Ray's brother and sister there and spent about two decades haunting the casinos and sheltering in the AC. When taking care of their house became too much, they returned to Vancouver, Wash., to live near daughter Barbara Hamilton and be close to other family members. Ray passed away in 2010, and Arlene who paid homage to good German food as a regular at Gustav's restaurant and kept up

her churchgoing at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church -- was a sass-dealing fixture at family gatherings right to the end. Survivors include daughter Barbara, sons Ronald and Bruce, three grandchildren and four great grandchildren. A memorial service will be 11 a.m., Aug. 9, at Vancouver's Beautiful Savior.

Tribute Wall



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

Evergreen Memorial Gardens - July 03, 2025 at 09:37 PM