



Serena Wilma Elder-Mutch

September 24, 1927 - February 11, 2019

Wilma Serena Hansen was born September 24, 1927, the 11th of 12 children, at Fergus Falls, MN. Her father, James M. Hansen, was a Danish emigrant to the United States at the age of 17. He died from a heart attack when Serena was 8 years old. Her mother was Damie Steafel Hansen. (Damie's father was a nurse in the Civil War. Serena remembered him playing ball with the children when in his 90's.. She said he laid down for a rest one day and just never woke up. He lived to 99 years old and Damie lived to 96 years old.) Wilma preferred her middle name, Serena, which is the name people know her by. Serena went to rest in her sleep February 11, 2019 at about 3:30 am. She was 91 years old. Her death is a sweet relief after 15 plus years of mental confusion and decline. Serena was the last living sibling of her family.

Olga, James, Marguerite, Fern, Inez, Edna, Paul, the infant twins who died, Maryalice, Serena and William made up the family. While all her siblings loved to go fishing in the river with their father, Serena preferred to stay in the house with her mother. Neither were fisher-women!

Serena remembered the day when she was in grade school near Fergus Falls, MN when the King of England and his family came to town on a tour to Canada and the United States. This was probably their 1939 visit. The children in Serena's school lined the roadway and sang to the Royals as they passed by.

Serena and Maryalice went off to Maplewood Academy in Hutchinson, MN right after they were baptized as Seventh-day Adventists, along with their mother, in 1942. Serena spent all 4 of her high school years there. The first year was very hard because she and Maryalice were so homesick. One teacher purchased bus tickets for them to go visit their oldest brother, James, in the Twin Cities one weekend. They were always grateful for that kind act.

Serena graduated from Maplewood Academy in 1946. She went on to Union College in Lincoln, NE to pursue Nursing. Partway into her Chemistry class she got appendicitis and had to have surgery. After missing some classes, she changed directions and worked on Elementary Education. Serena did not finish her teaching degree but went right into teaching. She taught at Maple Plain, MN and it is believed at Brainerd also, before she was married.

Serena married Clyde W. Elder, from Kansas, July 30, 1950 in Wadena, MN. To their union was born 3 daughters, Carolyn (LeRoy) Waymire (MT), Alice (David) Dettwiler (OH), Beverly Downing (deceased) and one son, Ronald (Carol) (WA). Serena loved her 10 grandchildren and also has 7 great-grandchildren (one deceased) with another on the way.

Carolyn and Alice remember their mother being their teacher for two years in our Detroit Lakes, MN church school, from 1964-1966. It was a very busy two years with juggling being a farm wife, having a toddler son and driving several miles each day to school. Serena was a good, thorough teacher and we girls learned many things we remember to this day. She always mentioned how she was proud of the students she taught.

In late summer 1968, the farm at Callaway sold and we had an auction sale. We headed West to a new life in College Place, WA. The first morning, after arriving, Serena walked across the yard to Whitman Manor Nursing Home and

was immediately hired. There was always plenty of work. And there was the abundance of wonderful fresh fruit. We all ate as much as we could hold. Serena loved canning and many precious jars were preserved too. She still loved her garden; both vegetables and flowers.

After Carolyn graduated from high school, Serena and Carolyn took nursing together at Walla Walla Community College and received their Associate Degree in 1972. Daughter Alice also pursued Nursing at Walla Walla College and graduated with her 4-year degree in 1976. As an RN, Serena worked many years in Nursing Homes, many of those years as Director of Nurses, both in Walla Walla, WA and the Gresham, OR area.

On February 9, 1981, Serena was dealt the blow of Clyde passing away from a short battle with cancer. They had celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary the previous year, July 30, 1980. She shed many tears as she worked in her garden but she was not a woman to sit down and become a hermit. She helped college students, continued teaching children at church, visited her children and kept busy in many activities, beside her work. She was thankful for a strong, young son to lean on during this difficult time. Ron was 18 when Clyde passed away. He was in love with his sweetheart and was planning for a summer wedding. Serena felt she needed him a little longer and so he took a bouquet to his bride-to-be and broke the news they would not be getting married that summer. But their wedding in December 1981 was beautiful and they are still enjoying each other to this day!

After Clyde's death, with a job change, she moved to the Portland, OR area to be a Director of Nurses in a Nursing Home there. She was able to navigate city living and driving quite well. Early mornings found her up and out on her long walks. She said she did not feel afraid; she was out before the people of the night were awake and up and about! She would find many coins as she

walked. She used that as a project to donate funds to spiritual outreach. For each penny she would find on the street, she would donate \$1.00. Imagine her thoughts, when one morning she found a \$5.00 bill! She wasn't sure how she would meet that promise, but she did. She was very faithful to her covenant with Jesus.

Eleven years after Clyde passed away, Serena met and married Howard E. Mutch at Rockwood Seventh-day Adventist church in Gresham, OR. They were married July 19, 1992. Last July they celebrated their 26th wedding anniversary. Howard had 3 adult sons, Marvin (CA), Mark (deseased), Martin (WA) and a daughter that died in infancy.

After their marriage, they moved to Selah, WA, where Howard had some family members. He remembered growing up in Yakima, WA. Carolyn and family had moved to Yakima recently to run their health food store, so Serena was able to be with family often. When Carolyn and family returned to Montana in 1999, Serena and Howard didn't take long to decide to move to Walla Walla, WA. Daughter Beverly lived there and had been diagnosed with stage 3 Ovarian Cancer. It was nice for them to be near her for those last couple years. Beverly passed away December 26, 2002.

By Thanksgiving 2003, it was very evident that Serena needed some help. She was no longer able to care for her home or prepare meals. It was a difficult journey to know just what to do. Through a series of events, when Serena was no longer able to live in her home, she and Howard moved to Columbia Care Manor in Vancouver, WA. There have been a few ownership changes but the care has been exceptional and her family has been so grateful that she and Howard have been able to live there as long as needed.

Serena loved gardening, loved working with children at church, was a good, healthful cook, was selfless and caring and loved the Lord Jesus. She rests in

Jesus and waits for that trumpet sounding, to wake her from her sleep. She died in the hope that she will see each one of her loved ones again; those of us who are still surviving and each one who has passed on before.

A memorial service was held at the home where Serena and Howard resided, Columbia Care Manor, on February 20, 2019. Serena's children were able to be there for that event but the grandchildren could not make it at that time. Since Serena was cremated, a graveside service is being planned, tentatively, for May 26, 2019. We are hoping to be a complete family at that service. Serena has a burial plot beside her first husband, Clyde, in Mt. Hope Cemetery in College Place, WA. That is where her ashes will be placed.

Howard continues to reside at Columbia Care Manor. It is home! Howard will celebrate his 84th birthday in June, 2019. Son Martin is close by so he can visit from time to time.

The information in this obituary is as best as we can recall certain events and situations. Thank you for understanding if you see something that you may remember just a little differently.

Tribute Wall

BB

“ I always admired Mrs. Elder! She took such good care of Clyde and kids. I remember Clyde telling of the Sabbath School workshops that she administered. Why she went all over the country! Clyde thought it would be a good idea to buy a motor home so she could have her supplies ready to go when duty called. When John Gross was looking for a place to live while attending College, I told him he couldn't find a nicer place to rent than Mrs. Elder's place-- I think they both were blessed with that deal! You would have to look far and wide to find a nicer woman than Mrs. Elder! Blessings, Bill Baer

Bill Baer - March 17, 2019 at 12:00 AM

JD

“ I was pretty little, but I remember traveling up to Calloway Minnesota to visit her family. I remember Serena being happy and fun to be around.

Jon Dickerson - March 16, 2019 at 12:00 AM

MN

“ I remember going to visit Howard and Grandma Mutch we could always expect a large bowl of olives at all times and Roma for 'happy hour'. She had many beautiful Crystal bowls displayed around her home. She was an elegant lady. They were willing to host many families at the same time, so I was able to spend time with some cousins at their home. We would play in the sprinklers in her yard... But we had to leave the mud outside :) they spent many holidays with us both in the Northwest and in Ohio. I will always be grateful for the time I had with her.

-Martha Dettwiler Navarro, granddaughter

Martha Navarro - March 16, 2019 at 12:00 AM