

# IN LOVING MEMORY OF

## ARLENE WOODROW

May 23, 1937 — October 10, 2019

Dear Family and Friends,

It is with sadness and a sense of deep loss that I am writing this Memorial Letter. My wife Arlene, unexpectedly, passed from this life on October 10, 2019, a few minutes past 12 noon. I was with her, and some other family members, as breathing slowed and finally stopped. This is a difficult time.

Arlene was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Within a couple years, the family moved to Long Beach, California. Later, in the early 50s, they relocated to Santa Cruz where her father, Bill Lotts, established an upholstery business. This was later carried on by Arlene's brother Willis, and continues today under the leadership of his son Ron. Arlene's parents, Bill and Mildred, lived in Scotts Valley, just north of Santa Cruz, where he served as Mayor.

### ARLENE IS SURVIVED BY:

**Brother:** Willis (Grants Pass, Oregon)

**Sister:** Ila May (Twin Falls, Idaho)

**Children:** Dale and Veronica

**7 Grandchildren:** Brad, Alex, Melanie, Chad, Josh, Jordyn, Brady.

**7 Great Grandchildren:** Payton, Hadley, Adaline, William, Braxton, Lazerus, Makenna.

The Memorial Service for Arlene was conducted at River of Life Church (Indio, California) where I serve as pastor along with my long-time friend Fred Horner. He and I met when we were teenagers at a church youth camp. Each of us went into full-time Christian ministry and always kept in touch. It was Fred who married Arlene and me, and so it seemed fitting that he would also officiate at her Memorial Service.

As Fred began his message, he told about the first time he conducted a funeral. He was a young pastor in his 20s. Five minutes before the service began, the wife of the deceased said: "I don't want you to say one good thing about him. He was not a good person, not a good father, not a good husband!"

The point Fred made was one of *contrast*: Arlene was a good person and much good could be said about her. From childhood she had a heart for God—a lovely person inside and out. I was blessed to be married to her—the happiest days of my life.

Also speaking at the service was our long-time friend Gwyn Vaughn—author, missionary, and for many years has served as pastor of Faith Christian Assembly in Seal Beach, California. He and I are nearly the same age, but he is four months older.



**Ralph and Arlene Woodrow, photo taken some years ago at a church luncheon, reflects happier times.**

So I call him "*Elder Vaughn*"! He gave Arlene and me the opportunity to minister many times at his church over the years.

It was a blessing to have Chaplain Don Eubank, Arlene's nephew, also take part. As a U. S. Army Chaplain he has been stationed in many parts of the world. He has attained a very high rank, yet remains a humble, kind, dedicated man of God. Most important to him is his desire to serve Jesus.

Among other pastors/ministers in attendance were: Vern Baumgardner, Eden Bloch Jr., Ken Conner, Darrell Green, Larry Jagers, Jerry Snyder, and Jerry Vaughn. A number of other pastors we know would have been there had it not been for the distance, one in Viet Nam and another in Italy come to mind.

Quite a few friends and relatives drove or flew long distances to be at her service. One relative, who was on a vacation in Jamaica, cut his vacation short in order to attend. Many very nice cards, calls, and emails have been received. In a fleeting moment I think: *I want to tell Arlene*. But, of course, it is not to be. We were always able to communicate very well with each other.

Among people I contacted on the day Arlene passed from this life, was Pastor Jimmie Westbrook in Deming, New Mexico. Back in 1959, we met in Lubbock, Texas where I was holding meetings. On that same trip I held meetings for his father in Houston. Then the following summer—1960—Jimmie and I held revival meetings together in the San Joaquin Valley. It was during that time he met his wife Ann. We kept in touch over the years and when I let him know about Arlene, his email response was very kind and caring. What a *shock* it was to hear from his daughters that *he*—suddenly and unexpectedly—died just *three days later*!

For quite a few years Arlene led a women's Bible study here in the desert. I am not sure how many lessons she wrote and taught, but over a thousand. And there were opportunities to speak numerous other places as well. At an earlier time she conducted the weekly Bible studies that were held within the State Capital building in Sacramento, attended largely by government workers.

For the past 33 years we lived in this house in Palm Springs—longer than either of us had ever lived in the same house, including our growing up years. So I have a multitude of memories here, including her decorations, pandas, butterflies, eagles and a variety of pictures, many of family, on the walls.

Ours was a happy home, and peaceful. There was never arguing or discord. What a blessing! Neither of us *ever* regretted our being together. Sadly, this cannot be said of many marriages. We were best friends. She often told me a woman could not have a better husband than me. That gave me something to live up to!

Among poems she wrote, this is a favorite:

**HELD BY GOD'S POWER**

*I have no reason to worry and fret  
Whether disasters come by tornado or jet  
For the God who holds the planets in course  
Guides my life and controls each force!*

*Job of old saw disaster and calamity  
Yet never fell to cursing or anxiety!  
Instead, he worshipped God with an open heart  
Said, "Naked I came and naked I'll depart!"*

*With the grace of a swan on this sea of life  
I'll rest in His peace, ignoring the strife  
For I'm peacefully enveloped in His love  
Beneath the wings of God above!*

The last few years of her life, Arlene struggled with dementia. Many things remained normal, but the ability to do certain things, little by little, became difficult—how to operate the microwave, dial the telephone, work the TV remote, use the computer, or play the piano. Early on, she wisely made the decision not to drive anymore. In time it became difficult to look up a biblical reference, to turn to a page in the hymn book, or read. She had always been a reader, so now I read to her. Walking became slow. During the last two years of her life her condition was such that I did the cooking, cleaning, shopping, dressing, etc.

I purposely did not talk around a lot about her condition. I tried to protect her from any unnecessary hurt or embarrassment. I avoided the word "Alzheimer's" with which her father struggled the last years of his life. When some would ask how things were going, my stock answer became: "One day at a time."

In his book *A Promise Kept*, Robertson McQuilkin—an effective minister of the gospel for many years—tells how he eventually set aside his ministry to the church, in order to care for his wife Muriel in her struggle with Alzheimer's. He had

promised "in sickness and in health...till death do us part." And he did just that. He described his love for her this way:

"She is a delight to me—her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don't *have* to care for her. I *get* to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person."

What a beautiful attitude—"I don't *have* to care for her... I *get* to!" This was my determination also, as a caregiver—to do my best for Arlene. She would have gladly done so for me, had things been the other way around. Having ministered in various ways to others over the years, it was only fitting that I minister to her needs. I would gladly do it again, if I could have her back.

There are twists and turns in life no one understands. We often find ourselves asking "Why?" But in the words of an old hymn,

*Trials dark on every hand,  
And we cannot understand,  
All the ways that God would lead us  
To that blessed Promised Land.  
But he guides us with his eye  
And we'll follow till we die.  
For we'll understand it better by and by!*



I know Arlene would be pleased that I share this family photo. Parents, Bill and Mildred Lotts, Arlene and Brother Willis, and Sister Ila May. Photo taken about 1965.



A few times Arlene and I talked about which of us might go first. Words from the song “Beyond the Sunset” now come to mind:

*Should you go first and I remain  
to walk the road alone  
I'll live in memory's garden dear  
with happy days we've known  
In spring I'll wait for roses red,  
when fades the lilacs bloom  
And in early fall when brown leaves fall,  
I'll catch a glimpse of you.*

*Should you go first and I remain,  
for battles to be fought  
Each thing you've touched along the way,  
will be a hallowed spot.  
I'll hear your voice, I'll see your smile,  
though blindly I may grope  
The memory of your helping hand  
will lead me on with hope.*

I applaud organizations that are working to find a cure for Alzheimer's and related afflictions. I also want to commend organizations that provide help for caregivers in various ways. In our giving, Arlene and I have supported various Christian ministries, also those dedicated to helping the poor and, from time to time, the local Humane Society. We considered animals as God's creatures too.



**This is our dog “Buddy”**



**Dale (son), Veronica (daughter), Ila May (sister)**

Each day our little dog “Buddy” was a joy to Arlene (to both of us). We used to say, in the wording of the KJV, that he was a friend that “sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). True. We rescued him from a shelter seven years ago. We always believed he was grateful to us for this; and we were grateful to have him. I am glad I have him now as my friend, a buddy for sure.

The place of burial for Arlene is the Palm Springs Memorial Park. A number of “celebrities” are also buried there, probably the best-known being Frank Sinatra (1915-1998). On his grave marker are the words “The Best is yet to Come.” Apparently this was one of his hit songs, the last one he sang in public. I don't know what those words meant to him, or exactly why they were used on the marker.

But for any who truly believe in Jesus Christ as Lord, the best is yet to come! “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we *shall* be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2, 3). *The best is yet to come!*

While we sorrow at the loss of a loved one, “we sorrow not as those who have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). We look forward to that glad Reunion Day. What a Day that will be!

In the words of the song sung at the graveside by Janet Spivey (song leader at our church) and her twin sister Janice:

*There's a land that is fairer than day,  
and by faith we can see it afar;  
for the Father waits over the way  
to prepare us a dwelling place there.  
In the sweet by and by,  
we shall meet on that beautiful shore.*

Paul the apostle wrote, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the *victory* through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). We have often sung the song “Victory in Jesus.” We have talked about victory in all kinds of situations—and rightly so. But as



**This photo shows some of the ministers who were present at Arlene's Memorial Service. There was a lot going on, and I regret that not all are included in the photo or their wives, who have served with them in Christian ministry, some for many years. Left to right: Ken Conner, Eden Bloch Jr. (my cousin), Gwyn Vaughn, Fred Horner, Jerry Vaughn, Vern Baumgardner, Ralph Woodrow.**

we look at this verse in context—the Resurrection Chapter—it speaks of *victory over death*. “Death is swallowed up in victory...O grave, where is your victory?...thanks be to God who gives us the victory”!

There can be little doubt that death is an *enemy*. But there is *victory* in Jesus!

The term “the days of our life” is in common use, including the closing portion of the often-quoted Twenty-third Psalm. The *days* of Arlene's life were 30,090—more days than many live, but still too short!

“For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

However, to paraphrase the words of Paul the apostle (2 Tim. 4:7), Arlene:

Fought a good fight,  
finished the race,  
and kept the faith.

Yours Sincerely,

*Ralph Woodrow*

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**For quite a few years now, Arlene had this picture of us framed and hanging in our house.**



**This is probably the most recent picture of us together, this one with great-grandson William. Despite the health challenges she faced, Arlene did not lose her smile and happy spirit!**