

## **Opal A. Solomonson**

*December 14, 1911—June 19, 2008*

### **Obituary**

Opal Alpha (Willand) Solomonson was born in Worth County on Dec. 14, 1911, to Wilhelm (Willy) and Clara (Calgaard) Willand, who farmed near Joice. She was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith, learning the Catechism and many hymns and prayers in Norwegian first.

One of eight children, Opal helped on the farm and grew up with a fondness for music, learning how to play the accordion from her father, who assembled a family band of sorts to play for neighborhood gatherings and parties. Though she had the benefit of only an eighth-grade education, Opal has always enjoyed reading (until recent years when her eyesight failed), and has always been ready for a good game of Scrabble or Boggle.

In June 1936 at Sion Lutheran Church east of Lake Mills, Opal married John Solomonson, a fun-loving soul whom she had met years earlier at a skating rink. They farmed, and lived on, the original Solomonson family farm until 1982, when they built a home in Lake Mills, where Opal lived until she moved to the Lake Mills Care Center in February 2008 following an accidental fall at the house.

Most of her adult years were spent primarily as a mother, church volunteer, and "farm wife," though her 10-plus years' employment at Deluxe provided extra support for all three of her children to attend Waldorf College, an institution that remained dear to her heart for decades.

Her life focused on her faith and her family. She took great joy from her involvement in church, and most of her active volunteer work was shared at North Prairie Lutheran, where she participated and held office in circles, Ladies Aid, Women's Missionary Federation, Women of the ELCA and other groups. She also taught Sunday school for many years and participated in making hundreds of quilts and layettes for Lutheran World Relief, which allowed expression for her great love of mission work. In recent years, she worshiped at Salem Lutheran Church, participating in activities as able.

Opal also loved gardening, particularly caring for hundreds of gladioli and hybrid irises, many of whose blooms were placed on the North Prairie altar on Sunday mornings. But no flower was as beautiful to Opal as a rose, especially a red rose, and she raised many a rosebush.

When she and John visited children and grandchildren over the years, they would often arrive with fresh-cut flowers, frozen corn, and homemade bread, jam, applesauce, cookies, bars and lefse - another sign of unconditional and unwavering love for family.

Opal was preceded in death by her husband of 65 years, John Solomonson; her sister, Mildred (and husband Gilman) Sorbo; her brothers, Walter Willand, Orin Willand and Stanley (Bud) Willand; and sisters- and brothers-in-law Cathryn and Andrew Gullixson, Carol and Harry Palm, Evelyn and Oliver Matson, and Milford and Helen Solomonson.

Opal is survived by three children, Owen Solomonson of Lake Mills (her primary caregiver in recent years); Sonia Solomonson of Streamwood, Ill.; and Cheryl (and Larry) Crockett of Eagan, Minn. She is also survived by six grandchildren: Randy (and Melinda) Nelsen of New Braunfels, Texas; Peter (and Sandi) Groenewold of Appleton, Wis.; Joel (and Susie) Groenewold of Hinsdale, Ill.; Aaron (and Sierra) Groenewold of Phoenix, Ariz.; Kelsey Crockett of Byrdstown, Tenn.; and Carmen Crockett of Eagan, Minn.; and by eight great-grandchildren (all Groenewolds): Peter and Sandi's daughter, Olivia; Joel and Susie's children, Spencer, Noah, Gretchen, Elizabeth, Maggie and Douglas; and Aaron and Sierra's daughter, Payton. Opal is also survived by sisters, Esther Bodde and Myrtle Tapps; brother, Clarence Willand and his wife Fern; sisters-in-law, Ellnora Willand and Carol Willand; and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services will be held at 10:30 a.m. Monday at Salem Lutheran Church in Lake Mills with Pastor W. Paul Weeg officiating. Burial will take place at North Prairie Cemetery in rural Scarville. Visitation will be from 4 to 7 p.m. Sunday at the Mittelstadt Funeral Home in Lake Mills, and again one hour prior to the service on Monday at the church. Memorials can be made to Hospice of North Iowa, Waldorf College, Lutheran World Relief, or the Salem Window Fund.