

Ray and Arlene Larson - Part 1

- by Doris Landerholm - May 17, 1998

Arlene Hennenger came into my life at work in 1946, when she was sent to the Governor's Office at the state capitol, from the high school secretarial class to get some work experience. Her expertise with shorthand and typing led to a paying position when she graduated that spring.

At that time, Ray was not in the picture. Arlene was a classmate and a friend of my sister's, but soon that friendship lapped over to include me. She had moved here during high school from Wisconsin, when her father was transferred with the Soo Line Railroad.

Arlene had another friend who happened to be Charlotte Larson, a younger sister of Ray's. Charlotte had moved to Omaha and when Ray and a friend of his invited Arlene to ride along to Omaha to visit her, a romance blossomed.

That trip also revealed not only the sheltered world of that day, but also Arlene's shy nature. She was embarrassed to go to the bathroom with two young men traveling with her. The guys, realizing that it had not been a long time since she had used the facilities started their own private bet on how long she could last. In the meantime when they stopped any time they would stand guard so as to monitor. By the time they got to Omaha and found Charlotte, who invited them in for coffee of all things, Arlene had almost burst! But true to her unique sense of humor, the story eventually became a source for a good laugh.

As time went on, Ed and I were married and three years later the Larsons were married. Of course, we were there. Ed was already acquainted with the Larson family, having done business with Ray's father. In fact Ray's mother and my mother shared a hospital room when they had sons the same week.

After Arlene and Ray were married, they lived on the family farm, so when Arlene came in to town to shop she left Ryan with me and then later it was Ryan and Rhonda. Ray found that his allergies were not compatible with farming so they moved to Bismarck, leaving a beautiful place on the river road, to take a position with Amoco. Later Lori was born, two girls and one boy, and we had two boys and one girl, a perfect match-up, but our kids had other ideas. They were together so much that they thought of each other as relatives.

Arlene went back to work, this time as secretary at Trinity and Ray proved himself at the refinery. They retired in recent years. Their backgrounds of "salt of the earth" parents with strong work ethics, and Christian morals have been revealed in their lives over and over, and in the lives of their children.

We have enjoyed lots of good times with the Larsons, shared sad times, but throughout the years they have remained constant and loyal friends. I believe that they personify what any organization would like to see in their membership. They are hard working, caring, dedicated and loyal members of S/N. They truly deserve this recognition.



Ray and Arlene Larson - Part 2

- by Janet Esser, May 17, 1998

It was 9 years ago at this time of year when Chuck and I rolled into North Dakota. We had barely found our way to the grocery store and back before Valborg, Sig and Margie took us in tow and the Sons of Norway indoctrination began. So, first it was a social, next this allowed event, and in the blink of an eye we were dancing and singing too.

Looking back, we are awed at the graciousness of all of you and your willingness to cope with our lack of Norwegian skills - couldn't dance, and sure couldn't speak the language! But, as gracious and warmly receptive you all were, two people made their way quickly into our hearts.

After our first blundering attempts at dancing, it was Arlene and Ray who made the kindest gesture of all. From Arlene came this comment - "Ray and I look forward to getting to know you better." Can anything top that?

So, from that time on Chuck and I have been astute observers of this wonderful pair. The most significant evaluation I can make is to share this thought.

If Arlene and Ray, in their bunads, were to enter a room of strangers, all would be touched by their presence. Not due to the bunads, but by the warmth, cheer, and ability they both share to make others feel valued and important to them. Sons of Norway would be represented at its very best.

Not everyone has these capabilities - certainly not I - but what a God given gift this is. We as a lodge should be grateful for those who offer no personal agenda other than their warmth and caring for and to folks within our lodge and the broad community outside of our Sons of Norway.

For sharing your gifts so sincerely Arlene and Ray, we are indebted.

So, what else can I dig up on these two special people? Well, one thing for sure, if something goes on in our lodge requiring helping hands, the Larsons offer four. Since our tenure in Sverdrup they have attended conventions, been part of cultural groups, picked up the highway garbage, served on our park board, done lutefisk and lefse hauling and diners, served as officers including vice president and president. There is never a job too big and never one too small.

Arlene, remember painting rock people and making nisse? And Ray, how about the painting of the Stabbur? That summer if you wanted to see Ray, you came to this park.

And always you can count on Ray's - what I call "studious" look and then a Harvey Schilling response. "I think I can."

And from our fun filled Arlene - always her quirky humor and zest for the joy of life as well as the enthusiasm she infuses into any event or project - well, except for the "Summer of the painting of the Stabbur" when things wore a little thin around their house.

Thank you, Arlene and Ray for your years of love and dedication to your lodge and your fellow lodge members - thank you for simply being - you!