

Doris Marjorie Severeid
4/19/27-12/25/10

Gloria! In excelsis deo.

For Doris, who loved to sing, is there a more fitting way to begin? This was, after all, the song the angels sang when Christ was born. It was a song of joy and love and praise: *Gloria! In excelsis deo*. Glory to God in the highest. If this is the song of the angels, Doris just might be lending her glorious soprano to the heavenly chorus right now.

In a way, though, it's a song she's been singing her whole life. She was a woman who loved angels, of course. And from her first days growing up on the farm near Lake Wilson to her last days here at Shorewood Place, angels certainly seem to have been watching over her.

The angels must have been smiling on her when she met Vinal. He was a friend of her older brother Raymond's. A much older friend ... he was 19 to her 15-1/2. I don't know if she was sweet on him or just looking to get out of the house, but she used to beg to hang around with them. Eventually Vinal realized she was more than just his buddy's kid sister. He finally got up the nerve to ask her out, just the two of them. A few rollerskating dates, a car trip or two and pretty soon there were wedding bells in the air. Vinal and Doris were married for almost 65 years ... Of course, any good relationship does have its compromises. Since Vinal had two left feet, Doris did have to find someone else to dance with. Luckily, her dad was there for that. Family members joked that the two of them would 'rather dance than eat.'

The angels were smiling on Doris when they blessed her with children to love. It was no doubt a little crazy at their house growing up. Vinal was often on the road for

work, so Doris got to be the disciplinarian as well as the nurturer. Good thing the kids never got into trouble. She was a typical 1950s mom. There was always something good baking in the oven and a project or two waiting by the sewing machine.

The angels were smiling as they watched Doris live life to the fullest. She had a wonderful sense of humor and more friends than you could count. When she turned 50 she celebrated for six weeks, even showing up to visit Marge at work decked out in a big blonde wig. I bet that turned a few heads. She loved getting together to play cards and socialize – Canasta, Farkle, dice. It was all in good fun. As she got older Vinal would determine whether it was a good day or not based on the weight of her little bag of nickels. And she treasured the time spent with the Dirty 7s and the Doris Club and the Mary Circle here at church.

Doris was particularly proud of her Norwegian heritage ... Vinal and Doris took four trips to Norway to visit cousins and see the family farm. On one of those trips she purchased the lovely bunad on display in the lounge today ... she wore it not once but twice this season, to the Sons of Norway craft show and the infamous Zumbro Bazaar. And she looked as beautiful as ever.

With all the angels who smiled on her, it's only fitting that her time on earth came to an end on that day of angels, Christmas Day. Which is why I chose to read the Christmas Day gospel from the beginning of John. It's a beautiful reminder that God's plans are so much bigger than we can imagine, and that God's heart overflows with love for us. There are verse in particular that stands out to me is verse 5: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* This verse is for you, Vinal, for Mike and Maureen and Marge, for anyone who knew and loved Doris and called her

mom, grandma, friend. It's hard to imagine life without her. There was no chance to say goodbye. Grief brings its own kind of darkness. But the gospel message is that Christ is our light. He promises to dry our tears and welcome us into his arms.

We tend to think of Christmas as the day Christ was born. But John saw it as a different kind of birthday: Christmas is the day that those who open their hearts to Jesus receive the power to become children of God. Christmas morning, then, wasn't the day Doris died, it was the day she realized fully the promises of God that give her life eternal. It was, in a way, her birthday too. And so even when our hearts are heavy, we can trust that Christ's light is with us, and his angels are watching over us, too. *Gloria! In excelsis deo.*