



## Arlene Helen Whittaker

November 25, 1943 - February 22, 2025

Arlene Helen Whittaker passed away on February 22, 2025, at UF Health Spanish Plains Hospital following a long battle with multiple complicated illnesses.

Arlene was born on November 25, 1943, to Walfred Eli Hakomaki and Helen Lucille Nelson (Hakomaki, later Petoletti) in Duluth, Minnesota. She was the eldest of two daughters and was thick-as-thieves with her beloved younger sister and best friend, Jean. During her childhood and teenage years, she thrived in school and social settings, laying the groundwork for the “social butterfly” personality she would be so well-known for throughout her life. Her warm and welcoming nature quickly turned strangers into friends, and she had an incredible way of making anyone and everyone feel special while in her presence. She graduated from Denfeld High School in 1961 and went on to earn her Associate’s Degree as a Medical Secretary.

Arlene was also stunningly beautiful, which caught the attention of her future husband and the love of her life, Thomas Allen Whittaker, in 1958. They were best friends and enjoyed 56 years of wedded bliss. They tied the knot on February 1, 1964, and welcomed their first child, Todd, later that year. In the years to follow they added three more children to their family: Dan, adopted from Korea in 1976, Elizabeth born in 1978, and Ann-marie born in 1981. Arlene was a wonderful mother and was deeply loved by her kids. Her

unconditional love and support never wavered, and she cherished the close relationships she had with all her children.

Their busy family moved around the country, living in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Northern Virginia, eventually returning to Minnesota in 1982, and finally made their way back home to Duluth in the 1990's. It was around this time that Arlene would be promoted to Grandma, yet another cherished role. She was pure magic to her five grandchildren: Leeanne, Joe, Paul, Mark, and finally Thomas who was born in 2019. She never missed an important event, and even frequented sports games, choir and band concerts and Grandparents' Days at school. Arlene and Tom hosted Christmas and the Fourth of July at their home on Pike Lake for many, many years, and Arlene made the holidays unforgettable for all, putting together beautiful decorations and huge, delicious meals. She'd always be the last to sit down and enjoy the fruits of her labor, and we hope she knew how much her family appreciated the hard work and dedication she put into making such wonderful memories for us all.

Arlene had a myriad of wonderful friends and loved spending time with them while enjoying her many hobbies and interests. She was a passionate golfer, playing countless rounds with Tom and their friends in Duluth, Leesburg, and many other locations amidst their world travels. She was also an avid reader, gardener, baker, card player, bowler and dedicated volunteer at the Damiano Center in Duluth. She deeply loved the Lord and was devoted to her church homes, First Lutheran Church in Duluth and Morrison United Methodist Church in Florida, participating in Bible studies, meals and movie nights for homeless teenagers and Ruth Circle. During her years in Leesburg, FL, she was renowned for her baking skills and spent many afternoons enjoying muffins, cookies and conversations with her neighbors and friends. She leaves a lasting impact and will be greatly missed in her social circles and church congregations.

Arlene is preceded in death by her beloved husband, Tom, and her parents, Wally and Helen. She is survived by her son Todd (Lisa) Whittaker, daughter Elizabeth (James) Allan, son Daniel Whittaker, daughter Ann-marie Whittaker, sister Jean (Steve) Hennessy, and grandchildren Leeanne, Joseph, Paul, Mark and Thomas.

Arrangements entrusted to Beyers Funeral Home of Leesburg, Florida.

# Tribute Wall

JC

“ Dear Jeannie, I grew up with Arlene in Duluth and was her friend all through school, graduation and beyond. I only just learned of her passing as I had called and emailed her several times throughout the last year or so but never heard back. Now I know why. Please accept my very sincere condolences to you and her whole family. I am so very sorry for your loss. She was a wonderful friend to me and all who knew her.

Sincerely,

Joan Crawford (Eisenach)

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Joan Crawford - April 27, 2025 at 05:50 PM

PB

“ Dear Jeannie and Whitaker children, my husband Brian and I had rented in the Plantation for many years before we had the good fortune of meeting your parents. What exceptional people! and your mother was a joy to talk to and to be with. and she was there for me when Brian died suddenly of a hemmoriagic stroke this past May. She and I had a wonderful phone conversation a month or so ago. I will truly miss having her in my life. She combined goodness and grace and I feel honored to have had her, even a short time, in my life. My sincerest condolences to you all. Patti Bicknell



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Patti Bicknell - March 03, 2025 at 09:19 PM

SY

“ Arlene was a kind, beautiful person and I will miss our telephone talks. I first met her when a group of Honeywell friends started a Kittenball team. We were mostly terrible, with a few exceptions but we had fun! That evolved into a Fantasy Football group before FFB was even popular. Tom and Arlene were our roomies from the very beginning when we did our group outing. Started with skiing weekend at Trollhagen and evolved into a golf weekend at Breezy Point. Many late nights playing hand and foot and solving world problems. Arlene was a cherished member of the annual Attitude Adjustment Camp AKA Girls Weekend. Over 40 years of precious memories! Love you and miss you. REST IN PEACE

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**Sue Yunker** - February 27, 2025 at 11:39 AM