

February 19, 2011

The Life of Clara Gustafson



- Clara T. Gustafson, 94 of Pierre died peacefully on February 16, 2011 at St. Mary's Hospital being held in the arms of the Lord.
- VISITATION: 5-7 pm Monday, February 21 at Maryhouse Chapel
- PRYAER SERVICE: 7:00 pm Monday, February 21 at Maryhouse
- SERVICES: 11:00 am Tuesday, February 22 at Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church
- BURIAL: 1:00 pm MST Wednesday, February 23 at Black Hills National Cemetery
- Clara Theresa Pusi was born on December 12, 1916 in Burke, SD to Joseph and Margaret (Hotz) Pusi and was the oldest of eight children. She graduated from Dallas High School and attended Mitchell Business School. While working at the local seed store, Clara met the Dallas agriculture teacher, Erland Gustafson, who, on his second visit to the store, started wearing crisp shirts with courting on his mind. They were married on June 27, 1941 and in December of that year her husband enlisted in the Army. She drove alone from SD to Kansas in a Model T Ford to be with E.W. on base and made many close friends in the military. Their multi-couple housing was sometimes only separated by curtains, so friendships formed quickly. After E.W. was discharged from the service, they moved to Groton and then to Clark where E.W. taught agriculture and Clara was the consummate homemaker. To this union two adopted children were blessed, Wynn and Diane. Clara was an excellent seamstress and was featured in the County Home Extension magazine for her beautiful handmade children's clothing. She was also active as a Boy Scout leader and on the Girl Scout council. She encouraged her children academically, in sports, and the arts. She attended all sporting events and concerts that involved her children. Upon E.W. becoming the superintendent of Clark Public Schools, her role changed to becoming the hostess to teacher events and "mom" to some first year teachers. She also took in nieces and nephews when needed and loved her family tirelessly. In 1968, E.W. accepted a job with state government and they moved to Pierre.
- Clara was active in her community and church in every town she called home. She was a 50+ member of the General Federation of Woman's Club which was involved in service projects to improve education and the environment. She held leadership positions in GFWC on local, state, and national levels. She was also a member of the Catholic Daughter's of American, St. Margaret's Band, the American Legion Auxiliary and St. Mary's Hospital Auxiliary, for whom she knitted numerous baby booties and caps.
- Traveling with E.W. was also a wonderful part of her life. They loved to learn about other cultures and were provided many opportunities through Rotary International and GFWC to see many countries. They visited over 30 countries around the world including Europe, Scandinavia, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. The last trip they took together in 1991 was to Alaska. They loved to share their traveling experiences and presented slide shows at elementary schools in Pierre.
- After the death of her husband in 1992, Clara moved to Nicollet Ave. and for the last eight years was in the loving company of the Parkwood residents. Her daily visits to the Maryhouse Chapel for rosary and Mass completed each day.
- Clara was preceded in death by her husband, her brothers, Lawrence (Rita) Pusi, Jerry Pusi and Joseph Pusi III; her sisters Rosella (Jack) Sandoval; Helen (Russell) Higginson.
- She is survived by her children, Wynn (Betty) Gustafson, Arden Hills, MN and Diane Kehrwald of Pierre, SD; grandchildren, Lisa (Danny) Gustafson, Jennie Gustafson, Adam (Nikki) Kehrwald, Emily Kehrwald, and Clara Jean Gustafson; sisters, Peg (Dick) Guhin of Coppell, TX and Lorraine (Clair) Cowan of Groton, SD; sister-in-law, Dottie Pusi, aunt Amelia Pusi and many beloved nieces and nephews.
- Memorials to St. Peter and Paul Family Center and Countryside Hospice will be established in her name.