



Joan Bjerknes

May 4, 2014

Joan "Jo" Kathryn (Koenecke) Bjerknes was born on August 27, 1934 to Frank and Elizabeth (Chworowsky) Koenecke. Jo graduated from Sherburne High School in 1952. She attended Mankato State and started teaching. She finished her schooling during the summers and graduated in 1956 with a degree in elementary education. During her teaching years she mostly taught 4th graders in various communities including: Dunnell and Fairmont, MN, Ft. Dodge, and Eagle Grove, IA, and St. Louis Park, MN. She also spent many summers working at the Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp. Jo was united in marriage to James Bjerknes in a double wedding with Jo's brother, Dean, and his bride, Vivian Bergeson, on August 15, 1965 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Estherville, IA. The couple lived in St. Louis Park for a time and moved to Bloomington where they started a family and were blessed with two children, Jodi and Jerome. Jo then worked as a homemaker raising their children. In 1977, the family moved to Alexandria, where Jim and Jo's brother, Dean, purchased Olson's Supermarket and named it Dean and Jim's Red Owl. Jo worked at the store and volunteered at Lincoln Elementary-including teaching Junior Great Books. After they sold the Red Owl store, Jo went to work at Target for 7 years. Jo was very active at First Lutheran Church, teaching junior high Sunday School, being in WELCA, belonging to various Bible studies, and singing in the Chancel Choir for 37 years. Jo loved to watch sports, especially the Minnesota Gopher basketball team and the Minnesota Twins. She enjoyed feeding and watching the birds, working in the garden, canning her famous

Russian dill pickles, and baking Christmas cookies and caramel rolls. Most important was her family as she was a loving wife of 49 years, a wonderful mother, and she spoiled her grandchildren which she adored, making sure not to miss one of the grandchildren's activities. She was also a devoted sister, and helped take care of everyone else first. Jo died on Sunday, May 4, 2014 at the St. Cloud Hospital at the age of 79. She is survived by her loving husband, Jim of Alexandria; daughter, Jodi (Tim) Schmidt of Leaf Valley; Jerome Bjerknes of St. Cloud; grandchildren, Tyler and Taryn Schmidt; brother, Dean (Vivian) Koenecke of Alexandria; sisters, Ruth Sands of Redwood Falls, Helen (Roger) Lueck of Fairmont and Jean Anderson of Spirit Lake, IA along with numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Jo was preceded in death by her parents, four sisters, and three brothers. A memorial service was held on Saturday, May 10, 2014 at First Lutheran Church in Alexandria. Entombment was in Kinkead Cemetery in Alexandria. Memorials are preferred to the First Lutheran Chancel Choir or the Building Fund. Arrangements are with the Anderson Funeral Home in Alexandria.