



Melba I. Akason

November 20, 1940 - January 30, 2010

Melba I. Akason: Melba died Saturday afternoon at the University of Iowa Hospital in Iowa City at the age of 69 years, 2 months and 10 days.

On June 1, 1968, Melba married William Akason at College Avenue Friends Meeting in Oskaloosa. They had three sons: Philip Andrew, b. 1969; Mark Olaf, b. 1971; and Joel Allen, b. 1975. Melba's proudest accomplishment was being a mother of these three sons, and she was thrilled to become a grandmother to six granddaughters.

Melba was an ""only"" child, and she expressed her dismay at this many times. One of the happiest moments was to learn she was pregnant a second time, so that Philip would not be an only child. And when the third baby by arrived she said ""Enough is Enough""!

Melba Irene Mendenhall was born November 20, 1940 in St. Louis, Missouri, the daughter of L. Herbert and Lillian Leach Mendenhall. The family moved to Oskaloosa, Iowa in the summer of 1949. Her father was a professor at William Penn College, and her mother was a kindergarten teacher at Jefferson and Garfield schools. Melba attended Whittier Grade School, and her favorite teachers were Erma Johnson, Harold Nehre and Maxine Mathew. She graduated from Oskaloosa High School in 1958.

Melba began playing the violin during her eighth grade year. She was a three year member of the Iowa All-State Orchestra, and in 1957 she was one of the concertmistresses of the Iowa All-State Orchestra.

Melba attended Drake University, graduating with a Bachelor of Music degree in 1962. That fall she began teaching in Grinnell; however by Thanksgiving of that year she resigned because she had contracted hepatitis. After several months of recuperation she began graduate school at Drake, earning her Masters of Music in 1966.

In the fall of 1964 she began her long teaching career in the Oskaloosa School District. She was the orchestra director at the Senior High and Junior High, the six elementary schools in the city, and at Rose Hill and Beacon during her first years of teachings. While she was raising her sons, she taught part-time in the local schools, at William Penn College, and Vennard College. Grandpa Herb was a most willing and loving babysitter.

In 1982 when her youngest son entered first grade she returned to teaching full-time in the district. She was an elementary string instructor and was the classroom music teacher at Garfield and Jefferson Schools. In 2001 she retired from teaching.

For many years she taught piano and string lessons at home. She taught many pre-schoolers and fourth graders their first tune on the violin. It was "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" to the rhythmic variation of "Mississippi Hot Dog".

Melba was an active member of Central United Methodist Church. She especially enjoyed singing in the choir, selecting special music for the summer months, playing for the Spanish service, serving on the Missions Committee,

and her service in the Central United Methodist Women.

She played violin in the Oskaloosa Symphony Orchestra and the Ottumwa Symphony Orchestra. For several years she was one of the local musicians who provided orchestral accompaniment for Penn College productions and for Oskaloosa Community Theater musicals.

Melba enjoyed traveling and working on family genealogy. She and Bill had been to her ancestral sites in central and southeastern Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Indiana, Kansas and Nebraska. For one who had a very small immediate family, her contacts and friendships with distant relations have grown many-fold. In 2008 she and Bill traveled to England and Scotland, and Melba had the "emotional high" of standing in Mildenhall, England and Inverness, Scotland, where her ancestors lived in the 1600's.

Her family includes Bill, her husband of more than 41 years; her son Philip and his wife Ginger and their daughters Logan and Lindsey of Waukee, Iowa; her son Mark and his wife Megan and their daughters Taylor and Lauren of Lee's Summit, Mo.; and her son Joel and his wife Beth and their daughters Brenna and Morgan of Marshalltown, Iowa. She is survived by an aunt, Dorothy Leach of Rochester, Minn., and several cousins, especially Marlana Vega of Eureka, Calif.; Nancy Holtz of Chicago Park, Calif.; and Carol Braam of Rochester, Minn. Also surviving her are two brothers-in-law and their wives and five nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, a sister-in-law and a nephew.

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Tribute Wall



“ *Melba I. Akason*

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