

# The Arnold Sentinel

“Serving the South Loup River Valley”

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## They've a Story to Tell

Shirley Bassett Shares About Her Life Devoted to Family and Mission Work

17th in a Series on Arnold's "Young at Heart" Residents

By Darlene Rimpley

Shirley Bassett is an Arnold girl, born and raised, and her family history is deeply embedded in Arnold history. She's enjoyed a life devoted to mission work, both in a foreign land and right here in Arnold.

Shirley's grandparents, Godfrey and Sarah Nansel, came from Iowa in 1884. They first settled in Sand Valley near Callaway, then they moved to Arnold where they built the original two-story house that became the Methodist parsonage. They were blessed with a family of 11 children, which included Shirley's father, Lloyd.

On May 2, 1927, Lloyd married Lois Avers, a young schoolteacher who came from Edgar, Nebraska, to teach at the Garfield School.

Shirley was born on April 6, 1936, to Lloyd and Lois at their home on Garfield Table. Lois passed away when Shirley was only four years old, leaving seven young children.

The Nansel children gained their early education in the Garfield, Yucca Valley and Kilmer Valley country schools. Wayne, the oldest son, attended school at Garfield through the tenth grade and completed his education at Curtis Agriculture School. The next four—Theda, Ken, Ardith and Shirley—graduated from Arnold High. Ralph, the youngest, graduated from Curtis. Another son, who was between Ken and Ardith in age, passed away when he was nine years old.

Lloyd passed away when Shirley was a freshman in high school. Life continued about the same, with Wayne being in charge of the farming. The rest of the family doing their share, which involved getting through school and maintaining home life. While attending high school, the kids boarded in town in the basement of Ray and Nancy Gill during the week and would go home on weekends.

At the time of her graduation from high school, Shirley began dating Gary Bassett, who was a 1951 AHS graduate. Their first date was to a stock car race in North Platte. After gradu-



Shirley displays memories of her time serving in the mission field. (Kristi Dvorak photo)

tion, Shirley attended the Mary Lanning School of Nursing in Hastings. Gary was in the Army, serving in Korea. After two years of school and upon Gary's discharge from the service, marriage won out and the couple was married on November 19, 1955.

They began farming in the Pleasant Hill area on the farm that belonged to Gary's parents, Clarence and Verel. Clarence passed away when Gary was nine, and the farm was rented out when Verel married Alvah Chriss. Gary and Shirley and their growing family of four children—Tracy, Randall, Ann and Holly—attended the Cliff Union Church.

Their pastor was preaching on Revelation, and through this teaching Gary and Shirley both turned their lives over to the Lord. After a time they felt called to go to the mission field and chose the New Tribes Mission. They had a farm sale in 1968 and set off on their adventure of service.

They attended a year of boot camp in Waukesha, Wisconsin, which involved learning how to bring the gospel to unreached people who often only spoke their tribal language. They also completed a six-week jungle camp during the summer,

which involved building a house and stove, carrying water, and no electricity or modern conveniences—in other words, primitive living.

They then went to the Language and Linguistic Institute at Camdenton, Missouri, for a year and a half. They returned to Arnold for six months before driving to their new home in Panama in a tightly packed pickup, including a shelf they had built for their four-month-old son Eric, who was born while they lived in Arnold.

The family arrived in Chepo, Panama, and began a year of Spanish study. Soon after, they became dorm parents, caring for children of missionaries up through the sixth grade. After a time, they moved to Chame, Panama, when the grade school was moved where the high school was. Chepo was south of the Panama Canal and Chame was west of it.

Shirley explained how the locks worked, and even showed me some online videos.

When asked if she ever had scares while in Panama, she remembered one time when the country was having a celebration. The firemen band would play, mostly drums, and march down the street, stopping at every tienda

(small store) to play and then were given a bottle of liquor. However, she felt safe on the streets.

They could go to the market and purchase five-cent bags of vegetables, chocolates or cookies. When they wanted to purchase meat, Gary would go to a meat market where the butcher would "slice off a hunk of meat" for them with a machete. At home they would take on the task of cutting it up. They made most of it into hamburger by cutting it into very small pieces, pulling out all the sinew, and grinding it with a small food grinder. Then they would freeze it. The milk they used was powdered whole milk, with a touch of vanilla added.

They would take the children to the Atlantic Ocean for one of the weekly PE sessions.

Gary wanted to be near his mother who was once again widowed, so after seven years in Panama they returned to the United States. They resided in Arnold for a year, where Randall spent his junior year at Arnold High. When Gary, Shirley and children returned to Camdenton to work at the mission center, Randall stayed with his grandmother so he could continue to at-

tend AHS his senior year.

At the mission center, Gary worked in the business office and became a work detail leader, and Shirley worked in the print shop. They remained in Camdenton for 23 years before retiring, although they did take a year's leave of absence in 1991-1992 due to Gary's mother's health. During this time, their youngest son Russell, who was born in the Canal Zone, also became an Arnold High graduate.

Retirement in 2001 brought them back to Arnold, where they purchased the former Ed and Irene Seda home. They removed the front porch and added two bedrooms and a living room. They became busy in church life when they united with the First Baptist Church.

Gary lost his life in an automobile accident on December 19, 2003, when they were returning home from Texas after a visit with their son Randall.

Today, Shirley visits her children as often as she can, although distance makes it difficult. Tracy and her husband Mike live in Canby, Oregon. They have two daughters and five grandchildren. Randall and his wife Diana live in Killeen, Texas. They have four children and five grandchildren, including one just born on January 9. Ann and her husband Joel live in Nashville, Tennessee. Holly and Steve live in Lenexa, Kansas, and have four sons. Eric and Holly (yes, another Holly) live in Columbia, Missouri.

## Letters Requested for The Alumni News

Make plans now to attend the annual Arnold alumni banquet and program scheduled for May 27, 2017. The board has been busy preparing an entertaining evening.

Alumni members—especially honored class members—are encouraged to submit a letter to The Alumni News. Letters should be sent no later than March 31 to Arnold Alumni, PO Box 21, Arnold, NE 69120.

A new directory will be printed this year by late spring.

Current alumni officers are Tim Rosentrater, president; Darlene Hagler Rimpley, first vice president; Josh Magill, second vice president; Patty Purcell and Kenny Goodnow, secretary-treasurer; and Janet Larreau,

and have two daughters. Russell is in Denver, Colorado.

This past summer a family reunion was held in Estes Park, with 36 of the 38 family members present.

Within ten months' time, the Nansel family lost three members: Ken, Ardith's husband and Theda's husband. Ardith lives on a farm outside of Brady; Theda lives in Broken Bow, and Ralph lives in Arnold.

Two trips stand out in Shirley's mind. When Steve and Holly were on the mission field in the Ivory Coast, Africa, Gary and Shirley spent three weeks visiting them. A trip to Alaska in September with Randall and Diana was also a real treat.

Shirley keeps busy, busy, busy! She works at senior meals, is a TeamMates mentor, delivers Meals on Wheels, and helps at the weekly Good News meetings. She has been a Bloodmobile co-chairman for about 11 years, helping to coordinate five Bloodmobiles a year. She's a deaconess at FBC and an officer in Ruth Circle. She attends the weekly prayer meetings and takes part in all other church events. Shirley always has a big garden and tries to walk every day. And, just for fun, she is currently taking an online course on Shakespeare.

Eighty years and counting, and I'm sure the next...well, maybe not 80...but all the years the Lord allows will find a busy, serving, happy Shirley.

editor. Other board members currently serving a term are April Tickle, Dru Magill, Gary Halstead and Betty Halstead Yeargain.

## Lower Loup NRD Will Hold First Meeting of 2017

When the Lower Loup NRD convenes its first meeting of 2017, there will be some new faces and some old faces seated around the Board of Directors table. January 26, 2017 will be the first NRD meeting for two new directors as well as 19 returning veterans.

The 21 Directors are elected to four-year terms on the Lower Loup NRD Board. Two are elected from each of the 10 subdistricts in the NRD and one is elected at-large to represent the entire District.

In Subdistrict 1, made up of the western two-thirds of Custer County, the Directors are Jim Adams of Anselmo and Tim Bartak of Merna. Adams won a new four-year term in the November election.

In Subdistrict 2, made up of southern Rock, all of Loup and Garfield, and northeast Custer and northern Valley Counties, Alan Petersen of Burwell and Henry Thoenen of Burwell are the Directors. Petersen was re-elected to a new term in the recent general election.

Subdistrict 3 is made up of southeast Custer, Sherman County (minus the northeast corner), southern Howard County, and northern Buffalo County. The Subdistrict 3 Directors are Rollie "Skip"

## School Board Reorganizes for a New Year

Loup Coop; Bowers, Nelson and Coleman will serve on the Personnel committee.

### Monthly Business

The Board unanimously approved the Minutes of the Last Meeting and the Claims report. Visitors and guests in attendance were Heather Furne and Leta Connell.

There were no non-action items on the agenda.

### Action Items

Action items included approval of the \$5,900.00 purchase of a Mitsubishi Multi-Zone Heat Pump for the SPED room. The approval of the contract with Southwest Nebraska Distance Education Network and the Negotiated Agreement for 2017-2018 were both unanimous. The Board appointed the Superintendent as the authorized repre-

sentative for Federal Funds. With a unanimous vote the Nebraska State Math Standards were also adopted.

### Teacher Resignation

Dr. Lewis read a letter of resignation to the Board from Ms. Batenhorst, Arnold's Kindergarten teacher. A motion was made to accept her letter, with regrets, and the motion carried. The Board members commented her early notification was greatly appreciated as it will allow plenty of time to advertise the position.

### Principal's Report

Mr. Morgan reported the teacher in-service on January 2 was quite productive. The school improvement committee completed writing surveys that will be given this next year. Staff

discussed personal beliefs of an effective classroom to lay a foundation for creating an instructional model as a staff. Arnold Public School was recognized by the Nebraska Secretary of State with a certificate for hosting our Veteran's Day Program.

Mr. Swingle is looking into purchasing ISO compliant eclipse viewing glasses for the Solar Eclipse in August. This is planned to be a K-12 event. Mr. Morgan then updated the Board on a few upcoming events including no school on January 20 due to the South Loup wrestling invite at Callaway, MNAC basketball the week of January 23, along with the MNAC art show January 28 at NPCC. The Arnold spelling bee will be held on February 1. This year MNAC wrestling will be

at Mullen on February 3. Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled on February 9 with a noon dismissal, no school on February 10 and no school scheduled on February 20 for K-5 due to staff attending a math conference at Kearney.

### Superintendent's Report

Dr. Lewis reports that a date needs to be set for the Buildings and Grounds Committee to meet. All committee members agreed they would meet Tuesday, January 24 at 8:00am. The next Board meeting is scheduled for February 14 at 7:00am, due to girls sub district basketball that evening.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10p.m.

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