WILLETTO, Jeanne Marion (Lund)

May 18, 1930
Viborg
April 11, 2005

Jeanne Marion Lund Willetto



After a long life that touched so many, her big heart and strong will left us late Monday evening, April 11, 2005. She was surrounded by her husband, children, and two of her eight grandchildren.

Born May 18, 1930, in Viborg, South Dakota, she was the oldest of the four children of Arne E. and Abbie S. Lund. She was the sister of Charles Lund (deceased), Richard Lund of Ruthers Glen, Virginia, and Charlene Detweiler of Hobbs, New Mexico. A proud graduate of Newell High School in Newell, South Dakota, Jeanne started at Yankton College in 1948, and after transferring, graduated from South Dakota State University in 1952 with a Bachelors Degree in Fashion Merchandising and Textiles. She remained an aficionado of the latter until the end, admiring the fabrics and necklaces of her hospice caregivers.

After a year or so of working for Dayton's department store in Minneapolis, Jeanne packed up and headed for Colorado with the intention of making a circle drive around the state to find a place to settle. Her only stop was Steamboat Springs, where she went to work at Lowell Whiteman's boys' ranch as the camp cook. There she met and married a long time wrangler, Tom Willetto. After a mountain courtship that included chasing wild horses on Storm Peak, and hiking Hans Peak, they married on March 28, 1959, a typical Yapa Valley March day - fresh snow on the ground and a crystal blue sky overhead. Jeanne also

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started her teaching career at Steamboat Springs High School as the home economics instructor.

In 1959, the family moved to Santa Barbara, California, where Jeanne's four children were born between 1960 and 1965. Carla Willetto (Todd O'Hara) of Fairbanks, Alaska; Abbie Wolfe (Todd) of Anchorage, Alaska; Thomas Willetto II (Linda) of Erie, Colorado; and Arne Willetto of Erie, Colorado; all benefited from having Jeanne as their loving mom, as she instilled a desire to learn and adventure, and make the best of their circumstances. The family made their way to Durango in 1970 where Jeanne and Tom maintained a residence until June of 2004. From 1974 until her retirement in 1984, Jeanne and Tom lived in Rough Rock, Arizona on the Navejo Reservation. Jeanne taught journalism and home economics to many high school students, including her own children. During her time in Rough Rock, Jeanne began bird watching in earnest. She became very accomplished and traveled as often as she could to find new "lifers" and nearly wore out her blue "Birds of North America" reference book. Her crowns achievement was the 202 lifers that she saw on, or from, the one acre in Durango. Her last day included seeing seven species just outside of her window.

After her retirement from teaching, Jeanne returned to Durango where she was very active with the Association of American University Women (AAUW), and the Durango Bird Club. She was a member of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Durango. She enjoyed good friends, birding of course, and the spectacular views such as the La Plata Mtns., Missionary Ridge, and the Animas Valley.

A celebration of life get together is planned for this summer. Family requests that memorial donations m Jeanne's name are made to either the AAUW, or the Sierra Club.

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