



Merial Cornelius

April 8, 1928 - January 26, 2010

After nearly 81 years and 10 months on this Earth, Gayle Cornelius left to spend eternity with her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

She died Tuesday, Jan. 26, at her home in Corvallis, with family and friends at her side, after a decades-long battle against Parkinson's disease.

Merial Gail (Gayle) Gilmer was born Easter morning, April 8, 1928, on the family farm three miles west of Ponca, Neb. She was the third daughter and fourth child of Lee and Bessie Gilmer. She was raised on the farm during the Depression years. Gayle turned 16 in 1944 and a month later graduated from Ponca High School.

At that time, most male teachers were off to war, and the county school board offered Gayle a teaching position. She attended Wayne State College that summer to get her teaching credentials and spent the next three school years as a teacher in rural Nebraska schools. At the age of 19, she retired from teaching, and in the fall of 1947, became a freshman at Nebraska Wesleyan University, where she graduated in 1951.

In 1948, Gayle met Grant Cornelius at a church picnic. They courted for three years, and were married on May 27, 1951. Married life started in Chicago, where Grant completed his military service, and where their first son, Kevin, was born in May 1952. They then worked two years at the family farm in Madrid, Neb., where their son, Tim, was born in 1953.

They moved to Lincoln, Neb., for a year while Grant completed a master's degree, then to Madison, Wis., for two years while Grant worked on a

doctorate. In 1958, Grant accepted a position with the USDA in Brookings, S.D. Their third son, Eric, was born in Brookings in 1961. Later in 1961, the USDA transferred Grant to Corvallis. Grant and Gayle loved living in Corvallis, and in 1964, Grant quit his job rather than accept another transfer.

In June 1964, they opened the Inkwell, a gift shop in downtown Corvallis. Gayle spent countless hours working with Grant at the Inkwell, and was instrumental in its success. They sold the business in 1974, and turned their attention to their recently purchased farm south of Corvallis. Gayle was a great partner and helpmate to Grant, not only in their business and on the farm, but also with their many rental properties.

Although Gayle had many demands placed on her time, she was always sure to make her family her priority. She lavished love and affection on her boys, and, when her sons were grown, on their wives and children. She was a great wife and a wonderful mother and grandmother.

Gayle was a prayer warrior. The foundation of her life was her relationship with Jesus. Grant and Gayle attended Calvin Presbyterian Church, and had many wonderful friends.

Gayle was preceded in death by her parents; her sister, Beth; her great-granddaughter, Melaina; and, in 2008, by Grant, her husband of almost 57 years. She is survived by her brother, Don; sisters Bonnie and Betty; her three sons and their wives; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, at Calvin Presbyterian Church, 1736 N.W. Dixon St.