

Aleta Lavonne (Surls) Archer

A lovely song was given to earth on the day Aleta Lavonne Surls was born.

After a very short childhood, Aleta, age 13, was sent away to tour on the “evangelistic field” with her older sister, evangelist Eva Surls, beginning what would be a lifetime pattern. Eva preached; Aleta sang and directed song services and children’s choirs, all while keeping her clothing as well as Eva’s in perfect, wrinkle-free condition.

A few years later at the age of 19, while in Northern California, Aleta met a young, handsome, black-haired pastor, Charles Russell Archer, and after a whirlwind courtship, the two married. She would no longer be called Aleta, but Lavonne.

One year later, her only child was born, a son, Calvin Russell. He added a beautiful melody into her heart, which she loved and sang until the last day of her life.

The Archers then started on an amazing journey of devoted ministry together in Iowa and Colorado, then back to Des Moines, Iowa, as president of Open Bible College. Lavonne ran the administrative office, directed the music department, and kept the books – very accurately I might add!

In 1960 the couple answered a call to pastor Faith Temple Open Bible Church in Tacoma, Washington, where they started the first ever Christian television program in the Pacific Northwest, *Door to Life*. Again Lavonne, the songbird, kept the song alive running the music department of Faith Temple and co-producing the television weekly program for twelve years.

Finally, the Russells answered the call to become Open Bible Standard Churches’ Eastern Region Superintendents. For 22 years they saw numerous churches and ministers join the wonderful and growing Open Bible Standard Churches denominational family. They remained there until Dr. C. Russell Archer passed away, in 1998.

Lavonne had many special gifts. She had a way of making everyone around her feel special, helping them realize their importance and often awakening a silenced

song into its full harmonious capabilities. She'd befriend the friendless and welcomed anyone and everyone, great or small, into her heart.

Her creativity knew no end. She would have a vision of how to reach the world for Christ – possibly a conference or a missions trip or a local city-wide rally – then she'd plan it, involve others in bringing it to life, and then keep it alive.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband Dr. C. Russell Archer; her parents, Fred and Olga Surls; two of her three sisters, Eva Anderson and Freda Parker; her brother, Merle Surls; and a host of friends and co-laborers in Christ. Her sister Roberta Huff is still alive and lives in Colorado.

Her son, Cal Archer, and his wife, Peggy, have four children and several grandchildren. They are:

Daughter Evangeline Gunn (Alexandra, Emmaline, Levi, and Aria) from Westlake Village, California;

Son Randal Archer (wife, Alisha; Cody; Ethan; and Julia) from Portland Oregon;

Son Aaron Archer (fiancé, Lauren Perini) from Glendora, California;

Daughter Antoinette LaVonne Murray (husband, Cliff; Jacob; and Abigail) from Murrieta, California.

The gift of music is very much alive and well and ever expanding in Lavonne's immediate and growing family.

“Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all. Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who ‘fears the Lord,’ she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

(Proverbs 31:28-31)

A private family memorial will be held January 26th.

If you desire to give a remembrance to honor Lavonne Archer, Cal requests that gifts be given to New Hope College, specifically towards the C. R. Archer preaching scholarship. Cards or notes to the family may be sent to:

Cal and Peggy Sue Archer

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