



Esther Lillie Bickel

October 26, 1927 - December 10, 2018

Esther Lillie (Lil) Bickel, 10/26/1927-12/12/2018

Lil was born to Stephen and Laverna Thomas 91 years ago in the family homestead near Overland Trail and West La Porte Avenue. Lil and her older sister, Dorothy walked or rode the horse to Mountain View Elementary School. After her parents' divorce, she moved with her mother to La Porte Avenue in town where she then rode her bicycle to Old Lincoln Junior High School. She enjoyed riding the trolley to and from Old Fort Collins High School. Lil graduated in 1945 and took a telegraphy course at the Emily Griffith Opportunity School so she could work for the Union Pacific Railroad at different stations from Cheyenne west to Rock Springs, WY, living in old converted boxcars. She played fast pitch softball and especially enjoyed roller derby. Lil was proud of the gold front tooth that resulted from an encounter on wheels. Thus, began a lifetime of being an independent, strong, feisty yet sweet little lady!

On a triple date to the Jitney dance in Longmont, Lil met Nyle Bickel. They soon married, and Lil extended her love of wheels to driving Nyle's gravel hauling trucks, an unusual sight in the 50's. They had two children, Sandra and Monty. Lil showed her strength of character when Nyle was seriously injured in a trucking accident. She cared for him for over a year, managed the house and raised the children. The family enjoyed camping, hunting, fishing, bowling and playing golf. Lil was an outstanding bowler, participating in a variety of leagues and winning many tournaments here and around the country. She received a lifetime participation award from the USBC at the age of 88, and continued bowling through the age of 90. A member of the City Park Nine Ladies golf league since the 60's, Lil also played golf through the age of 90 and loved her friendship with the many golfers over the decades. She continued to roller skate into her 80's and amazed those who would see her graceful dance skating.

Interested in even bigger wheels, Lil became a school bus driver for Poudre School District in 1965 and drove for 12 years before they tapped her incredible organization and head for details. She became a bus operations supervisor and then the transportation

planner, responsible for routing all the buses. Lil transitioned the district routing from paper maps on the wall to one of the first computerized programs. A highlight of her summers were the trips to the mid-west to bring back new buses: she delighted in planning the trips and recording all the details. Retiring in 1992, Lil was an easygoing companion, traveling on various trips for several years with her lifelong friend, Betty Moore, within the United States and in Europe. She also loved riding thousands of miles around the country with Monty for his bowling alley business. Camping continued with trips in her daughter's motor home. A regular volunteer at her daughter's school, Lil truly enjoyed the detailed work of helping prepare and organize the state testing materials, making it fun by sharing stories and laughs.

Though slowed by congestive heart failure and confused by dementia in her final years, Lil remained positive and as active as she could be, enjoying and making the most of each minute, sweet and strong in spirit to the end. We now envision mom dancing and rolling on in heaven!

Lil is survived by her children, Sandy and Monty (Michelle); and grandchildren, Kevin and Krystal. The family had a private celebration of her life.

Heartfelt thanks to the staff at Centre Avenue Health and Rehabilitation and Pathways Hospice for the excellent, kind, loving care given to Lil in her final months.

If so inclined, the family request donations in Lil's honor to the Alzheimer's Association act.alz.org/donate.

Comments



“ Lil and Nyle lived on the corner at Vine and North Taft Hill Road they were my neighbors till I moved out of mom and dad house in 1990. I remember Nyle's single axle dump truck getting gravel at Sterling Sand and Gravel down the road. My mom JoAnne drove school bus with Lil and they bowl'd together on Wednesday nights. We would go to Sam's for dinner after bowling. I would see Lil at Hair Plus getting her hair done, she would get her hair teased so it was perfect high on the top of her head. Margret at Hair Plus has cut my hair for over 45 years so I would imagine Lil could say the same thing.



Elaine Allbrandt - January 05 at 01:29 AM



“ Mrs. Bickel was my school bus driver in the 70's and my neighbor on West Vine Dr. She was such a lovely lady. I ran into her about a year ago and she looked exactly the same and was still just as lovely. My condolences to the family.

Cindy Salazar

Cynthia Salazar - December 20, 2018 at 09:18 PM



“ Sandy,
So sorry to hear of the loss of your mother. Such beautiful memories were shared in the obituary. Possibly written by a former English teacher?! You were always a favorite teacher of mine at Wellington. Keep the memories close to your heart.

Regards,
Trina Burdick Engholm

Trina Burdick Engholm - December 17, 2018 at 03:20 PM



“ I met Lillie for the first time just a few days ago, while visiting my Aunt in a rehab center in Fort Collins. Saw the name Lillie Bickel on a door near my Aunt's room, and later asked Lil in the cafeteria if she has a daughter named Sandy, who went to school with my older sister, way back when. Lillie beamed and said, “Oh, Yes!” She told me all about her family and was so proud of everyone. We talked about Fort Collins history, since my family had farmed sugar beets and fed cattle east of town.

About an hour later I saw Lil roll her wheel chair past my Aunt's room and I waved hello again. Then, telling my Aunt that Mrs. Bickel's daughter went to school with sis, all of a sudden Lil came whipping into the room in her wheelchair and asked me with a smile, “Are you talking about ME?” I retorted, “Yep! - so pull up a chair here.” My Aunt just rolled her eyes. A few minutes later Lil took off down the hall again. She looked so pleasant and calm and full of life. I'm actually amazed she's gone so soon after. Thanking God I had a brief chance to meet this happy, nice lady who made such a difference here on earth, leaving a grand legacy for others to enjoy.

~ Daniel Einarsen, son of Harold Einarsen - also featured in a Bohlender obituary)

Daniel Einarsen - December 15, 2018 at 12:45 AM



“ Sandy,
What a character your mom was! So fiercely independent and such a strong will, right to the end. I will miss her but know that she is home and safe now, starting a bowling league and enjoying a life full of memories. She lives on in her strong, independent daughter, for sure. Hugs to you! Alicia D.

Tiggy D. - December 14, 2018 at 11:24 PM