

Leonore 'Lee' Lambert, 93, singer and matriarch of a musical family



Dale Anderson

May 22, 1927 – Dec. 21, 2020

Lee Lambert was almost always singing. And when she wasn't singing, more often than not, she was encouraging other people to sing.

At Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in East Aurora, she directed the choir and folk group. She was a parts coach for barbershop quartets and sang in the Sweet Adelines. She was founder and director of the Senior Notes singing group in the East Aurora Senior Center.

With her husband Lou, she was a volunteer singalong leader once a week from 1981 to 2000 at Aurora Park Nursing Home, now Absolut Care in East Aurora. She also was active with the Village Singers in East Aurora and the Orchard Park Chorale.

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Her daughter Marlena Lambert wrote that she had a “passion for all things musical, whether it was singing, dancing, playing piano or hearing drums, winds or string instruments. She was thrilled by it all (if it was ‘good’ and if it needed coaching, she was quick to point out just how it could be improved). Whether a small family gathering or a church hall or a choral concert, whether singing herself or directing others, she gave it her all.”

“She had a song for everything,” said another daughter, Caroline Fulkerson. “Say a word and she’d break into song about it.”

The matriarch of a musical family, her 10 children all sing and perform as amateurs or professionals in church, on stage and on the radio.

She died Dec. 21 after a period of declining health. She was 93.

Born in Buffalo, Leonore May Schmitt was the youngest of four girls. Her father played the mandolin and had a band called the Gullyjumpers. She grew up near the Buffalo Museum of Science and developed a lifelong enthusiasm for birds and fossils on the museum’s field trips.

She attended St. Mary Magdalene School and was a 1946 graduate of East High School, where she was a member of the tennis team and played clarinet in the school band.

The first member of her family to earn a four-year college degree, she graduated in 1950 from Fredonia State Teachers College, where she played drums in the college band and was president of the Newman Club.

After teaching music for a year in the Thomas Indian School in Gowanda, in 1951 she married Louis J. Lambert, a high school industrial arts teacher who also came from a musical family. All of their parents sang and performed in the church’s dramatic circle.

When her husband got his first teaching job in East Greenbush, near Albany, she taught music in an elementary school there. They returned to the Buffalo area in 1955 when he became an industrial arts teacher at the newly opened Amherst Junior High School.

She served as choir director and folk group director at St. Mary Magdalene Church, then was song leader and director of the children’s choir and the adult ensemble at St. Benedict’s Catholic Church in Eggertsville.

After moving to East Aurora in 1970, Mrs. Lambert was a substitute music teacher at Immaculate Conception School and gave private piano lessons.

When the new Immaculate Conception church building was completed in 1978, she wrote and edited a history of the parish. She also wrote poems and song parodies.

“She loved writing simple rhyming poems on virtually anything,” her daughter Marlena wrote, “be it the margin of a newspaper or the envelope of a bank statement – whatever was within reach at the moment.”

Her daughter Caroline noted, “After Vatican II, Mom decided there should be an English language ‘Ave Maria,’ so she wrote the song ‘Hail Mary,’ including accompaniment and four-part vocal harmony.”

Described by Marlena as “incredibly passionate about civic engagement, justice and peace,” she was a member of the League of Women Voters for more than 50 years, served as president of the Aurora/Elma Chapter and chaired the merger of local LWV chapters into a single regional organization.

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She was the LWV representative to the **Citizen Task Force** for the **West Valley Nuclear Waste Site** and took part in the 1983 march on Washington, D.C., for nuclear disarmament.

She received the Making Democracy Work Award in 2010 from the League of Women Voters. In 2013, LWV Buffalo Niagara created the Lee Award, named after her and two other members named Lee, that recognizes those with a “long-term commitment to the League.”

She also was an elections inspector and a member of East Aurora Chapter 4074, AARP, which her husband co-founded.

Mr. Lambert died in 2017.

Survivors include six daughters, Louise, Jeanne, Annette Lane, Caroline Fulkerson, Marlina and Julie Ann; four sons, Peter, George, Leo and Douglas; 24 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.