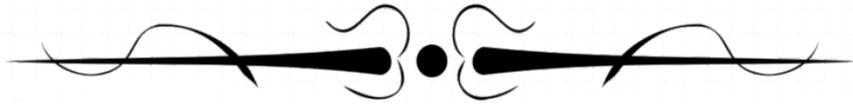


# Arleigh C. Anderson



*May 13, 1925 - June 30, 2021*

Elaine, April, Craig, family and friends, grace and peace to you from the one who lived for us, who died for us, and who now claims victory over every grave, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

One of my favorite themes in the Bible is perseverance. Noah spends weeks and weeks building an ark long before there's a cloud in the sky. Moses leads God's chosen people around in the wilderness a lot longer than I would have—40 years. Mary agrees to carry a very special baby even though all the neighbors are talking about what's going to become of this child.

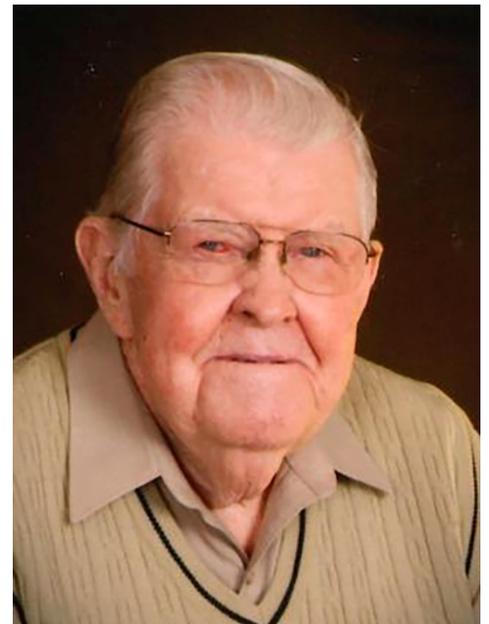
And then there's the Apostle Paul. Paul might have had more perseverance than any of them. As Paul traveled from city to city sharing the good news of Jesus, he faced countless obstacles. He put up with hungry days and sleepless nights. He faced danger from raging rivers and marauding bandits. Five times he received 39 lashes, three times he was shipwrecked, once he was stoned, and at least twice he was imprisoned.

What's amazing is that when Paul shared this litany of woes, he wasn't complaining. He was merely making an observation. Namely, he said he had learned to be content in almost any situation. Weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities. "With Christ's help," said Paul, "I can face just about anything." And he meant it.

I think Arleigh Anderson was someone who persevered. From the stories I've been hearing, Arleigh also could face just about anything. This might have had something to do with where Arleigh grew up - on a farm in the Kenyon area. And when? In the middle of the Great Depression.

In a grandparents' book, Arleigh described many of his experiences in life. He mentioned that he was born in a maternity home in Kenyon, the oldest child of Arthur and Clare Anderson. They were a church-going family. They had a farm home that was typical for the time: no electricity, no running water, no indoor toilets. If that didn't toughen up a person, I'm not sure what would.

Arleigh went to country school in the Nerstrand neighborhood. It was a little over a mile from home. No word on whether he had to walk uphill both ways or not. Like many of these country schools, it had only one room. There were three in Arleigh's class. There was no running water. It was heated by a wood-burning stove. They had a large pan of water on top of the stove. That's how they warmed up their food for lunch. Arleigh's favorite class was arithmetic. Arleigh didn't complain. It was the only school he knew. Rather, he persevered.



Like most farm families, there was lots to do on the farm. There were animals to feed, cows to milk, field work and chores. The family worked hard. They did everything they could to hang on to the farm during the Depression, and somehow they managed to do it.

Arleigh mentions in his grandparent's book that there was a little time for sports and fishing. Arleigh really enjoyed those times. He occasionally got store-bought treats - candy and ice cream. The book asked what mischievous childhood experiences he remembered? Arleigh responded: "I never did anything wrong." But then he playfully added a question mark. He just wasn't going to tell us. Compare that to Arleigh's answers about his first crush and his first date. For both he wrote "secret." He wasn't going to tell us. This was definitely a man of intrigue and mystery.

Arleigh really hit his stride in high school: he played football and basketball and was in a school play. Following up on his fondness for arithmetic, math became his favorite subject. With a mop of red hair on top of his head, he got referred to as "Big Red." His younger brother Gordon got referred to as "Little Red." Sister Burdelle was simply "Red." I have a hunch that the family hair color attracted lots of attention.

Would you believe that Arleigh's parents bought him a 1931 Ford Model A as a high school graduation gift? That was probably because he never did anything wrong, right?

Arleigh was growing up. With a strong work ethic learned on the farm, he was ready to take on all sorts of challenges. He operated heavy equipment and helped build roads in Iowa. He joined the Army, and while enrolled, he learned even more about operating heavy equipment; and he took a leadership course too.

Arleigh married Elaine in December of 1951. They were married at Grace Lutheran Church in Nerstrand. For you math majors out there, they were together almost 70 years. They started life together in a thirty-foot trailer while Arleigh continued building roads. Children came into the picture: Jeanette, April, and Craig. It wasn't too long before they needed a more suitable home - a three-bedroom rambler in Rochester fit the bill.

It was also time to look for a more stable job. Arleigh started Minnesota State Patrol training and in August of 1955 he became a state patrol officer. Arleigh would go on to work for 30 years in the field, eventually becoming a lieutenant. He liked the work a lot. I wonder how many accidents he investigated and how many speeding tickets he issued. Arleigh found the work challenging, something different every day. Though he admitted in his book that it sometimes bothered him when he had to miss so many of his children's school events because of his work schedule.

The grandparent's book asked him: "What's the most difficult choice you ever had to make?" Arleigh answered: "Joining the highway patrol." The book followed up: "Would you make the same choice again?" Arleigh answered: "Yes." Maybe that shouldn't surprise us. He didn't complain. No, he persevered.

When I hear stories about Arleigh, I can't help but think he was made for the open road. They took family vacations to Minnesota lake cabins, Montana, California, Disneyland, Alaska. April remembers going deep sea fishing, and snagging - of all things - a pelican. Craig remembers golfing and fishing with his dad. Arleigh built a pontoon boat for their fishing expeditions. He called it "The Lazy Day." Elaine remembers a trip to Hawaii. It was thirty-below when they left Minnesota; and by the time they got to Hawaii it was so hot and

humid they could barely breathe. After Arleigh retired from the state patrol, he drove a motorcoach all over the United States for another 20 years.

The family experienced some tough times along the way. Daughter Jannette bravely battled MS for over 30 years. Son-in-law Irwin suffered with esophageal cancer. Arleigh, along with the rest of the family, didn't complain. They persevered.

Somebody once said that the trials of life can make you either a bitter person or a better person. I think in Arleigh's case, they made him a better person. Over the years he became stronger, braver, more patient, more humble. He persevered to the point where he could say, "With Christ's help, I can face just about anything." And he meant it.

In this regard, Arleigh was a little like the Apostle Paul. When Paul neared the end of his life, he was able to look back with a feeling of accomplishment. He had worked hard and traveled far and loved much. He wrote a goodbye letter to a young coworker named Timothy. He said: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness."

I could see Arleigh saying those words. He'd worked hard and traveled far and loved much. And now it was time to go. He was tired. His mind and body were worn out. It was time for the crown of righteousness. It was time to go home.

Today is a day for us to remember and to say goodbye. That's hard. Arleigh has been such an important part of this family. He's going to be missed.

As we say our goodbyes, we entrust Arleigh to God's eternal care. We trust that, when Arleigh left this earth, God was there to meet him and to say: "Well done, good and faithful servant, well done. You have fought the good fight. You have finished the race. You have kept the faith."

Amen.

Pastor Vern Christopherson  
July 8, 2021