

DONOR STORIES

ORVILLE AND LOANNA BLOETHE “Orville and Loanna Bloethe Family Fund”

Orville and Loanna Bloethe have always been inclined to share with others in their community; especially students. Their emphasis for giving has been to expose students to the arts, and experience the thrill of a quality production at Hancher in Iowa City, Iowa. To help students with interests such as these, the Bloethe’s chose to create the Orville and Loanna Bloethe Family Fund through the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.



ORVILLE AND LOANNA BLOETHE

Orville W. Bloethe grew up in Victor, Iowa. There he attended a rural school (Warren No. 7) until he went to Victor High School. In 1937, he attended the University of Iowa. Within twenty days of his June 1941 graduation, Orville was called into the service. There he spent three and a half years overseas in Australia and New Guinea during World War II.

He returned to the United States in September 1945 and entered law school. After graduating in August 1947, Orville came back to Victor and worked with his uncle for four years. He has had his own practice ever since. Over the years, he has had several partners in law, and he currently has two.

Loanna Bloethe was born on December 11, 1922, at her parent’s farmhouse in rural Perry, Iowa. Growing up during the Great Depression, Loanna learned the joys of work and self sufficiency at an early age. After graduating from Perry High School, Loanna attended the University of Iowa, where she graduated with a degree in food science and clothing in 1944.

Upon earning her degree, Loanna taught school for two years in Correctionville, Iowa, and then worked as a dietician for the United Airlines in Chicago, Illinois and Cheyenne, Wyoming.

In August 1946, Loanna’s brother brought home a law school classmate, Orville, to attend the State Fair. This was the first time Loanna and Orville would meet. They corresponded faithfully and visited six times over the next winter and were married on their seventh date together April 4, 1947. Shortly after the couple moved to Victor and started a family.

“On Monday morning I had to leave, and with Loanna on one side of the gate and I on the other, I wondered if we would ever meet again...on the 7th time we met, we were married.”

Loanna and Orville have always been involved with the local school in Victor. Orville has been a school board secretary since the early 1960’s and continues today. They have established numerous scholarships in Victor: one for Orville’s brother, Leonard, who lost his life in World War II; a scholarship for his parents; and one for Orville and Loanna themselves. They have also established scholarships at Kirkwood Community College and the University of Iowa. In addition to the scholarships, the Bloethe’s have funded and hosted a program each year which takes the entire high school to the Hancher for dinner.

It has always been the hope of Orville and Loanna Bloethe that students will gain exposure to the arts through this fund. The Bloethe’s want everyone to experience the thrill of a great play that has a life lesson.

Loanna Bloethe passed away on March 14, 2009. Orville offered the following tribute in her memory:

Having been overseas 3 1/2 years, when WWII ended in mid-August, 1945, I was on the first ship home from Australia. I was discharged at Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis and took the Rock Island train to Iowa City where I went to the Law School to see if I could take classes yet that fall. Fortunately, I was accepted and attended the fall and spring sessions as well as the summer session. As we neared the end of the summer session, a farm boy from Perry, Carl Schnoor, asked me if I would care to take the train to Des Moines to go to the State Fair and then come to his home to stay for the weekend. I thought it was a great idea, so I accepted.

The next morning, as I was fastening up my shirt, a beautiful girl in a fresh gingham dress came out of the kitchen. It was a picture that will always remain in my mind. When I inquired what she was preparing for a meal, she said, "Butterfly wings and hummingbird tongues."

On Monday morning I had to leave, and with Loanna on one side of the gate and I on the other, I wondered if we would ever meet again. Fortunately, the 3-cent stamp made conversation easy and on the 7th time we met, we were married. It's a wonderful story and so began our beautiful love story, which lasted nearly 62 years.

Loanna's will to do great things for her family helped create many opportunities for us to enjoy wonderful, unforgettable experiences.

In 1967 the World's Fair was being held in Montreal, Canada. Loanna and I talked often that it would be wonderful if we could take the family to the World's Fair. The closer we came to the time we would be leaving, the more I became convinced, "No, not this year, maybe next." I relayed these thoughts to Loanna. When I came home the next day, in the driveway stood a fold-down camper trailer and a trailer hitch attached to the car. Fortunately, I had the good sense to tell the family, "Yes, I guess we are going to the World's Fair in Montreal."

The World's fair was an amazing experience. We went to Quebec City, then up the St. Lawrence Seaway to Gaspé where we camped at the ocean's side with serene beauty as the fishermen brought in their day's catch. We then went to Albany, New York, took a flight to New York City where we toured a submarine, took a trip around Staten Island, went to the top of the Empire State Building, and returned once again to Albany by train. None of this would have ever happened had it not been for the great sense and persistence of my wonderful wife, Loanna.

Loanna loved nature, the outdoors, camping and going to National Parks. We would rent a travel trailer and most, if not at all times, Loanna would cook the meals. She took the lid of a Maytag washer and propped up one end with a brick, put charcoal under the lid and after the lid was hot, put on the package of potatoes, hamburger patties and baked beans. It was a great meal, thanks to the homemade grill that was Loanna's idea.

On a Northern Minnesota trip, all of us went out to pick blueberries. They were both scarce and little, but sweet and good. There was the usual grill for campers so Loanna made a crust, took tin foil and made very little blueberry pies, cooking them on the open grill. They were simply wonderful (made by the sweetest, most wonderful Mother and Wife ever).

Thank you, Loanna, for so many, many wonderful things only a mother and wife could do. You are the best and we love you very much. ~ Orville

CHILDREN

Chris Bloethe
Craig Bloethe
Tamia O'Rourke
Cheryl Bloethe Linder

GRANDCHILDREN

Jamie O'Rourke
Kelly Grabendike
Darcy Huisman
Codie Bloethe
Chase Bloethe
Ann Linder
Kari Linder