



## Dr. Mary Marjorie Blomquist

December 14, 1936 - May 26, 2023

Dr. Mary Marjorie Blomquist, 86, of Bloomington MN, Felch MI, and Niceville FL (and formerly of Dexter IA, Arden Hills MN, and Iringa Tanzania), passed away on May 26, 2023. Mary was born on December 14, 1936 in Des Moines, Iowa, the daughter of the late C. Robert Osborn, a medical doctor, and D. Ruth Peck, a grade school teacher, and later stepdaughter of Wanda Osborn.

Already demonstrating her keen intelligence and commitment to education, in 1954 Mary graduated as high school valedictorian in Dexter, Iowa, where she also played basketball. She was an honor student at Iowa State University, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Textile Chemistry in 1958. She received multiple educational scholarships and was a member of several honor societies including Phi Kappa Phi, Iota Sigma Pi, Kappa Omicron Nu, and Alpha Lambda Delta.

She was ahead of her time for a woman in advanced education. Reflecting later on her path, Mary noted that career counselors in the 1950s discouraged female students from majoring in hard sciences or math and guided her away from the chemistry major she desired. In 1960, Mary earned her Masters of Science from the University of Minnesota in Textile Chemistry and Biometrics.

Mary continued at the University of Minnesota, working towards her PhD. She met Arnold Blomquist as a fellow student in a graduate-level statistics class

and they were married on June 26, 1960 in Mary's hometown of Dexter, Iowa.

Mary did mathematical analysis for the US Air Force during the mid-1960s, where she was awarded the Air Force Patricia Kayes Glass Award for Outstanding Women Scientists and Engineers. In an article from the time, she was described as "a vital team member of the Ballistics Technology Division, Directorate of Armament Development of the Research and Technology Division" at Eglin Air Force Base. Mary went on to achieve her PhD in Mathematical Statistics from the University of Minnesota in 1966.

Mary cared deeply about the world, and together with Arne, her husband of 55 years until his death in 2015, used her skills and talents to lead many projects. She founded and operated Biocentric Inc., a pioneering woman-owned business providing mathematical modeling services to government and industry working on a wide range of projects: Dutch elm disease and oak wilt; the effects of coal gasification plants on nearby cities; the environmental impact of phosphate-containing effluent on lakes; studies on recreational use of lakes for the Department of Natural Resources; and data availability and compatibility in developing countries for USAID.

For several years, Mary worked as the Budget and Planning Officer for the College of Liberal Arts of the University of Minnesota, which helped prepare her for the next major life step with Arne. In collaboration with Bishop Owdenberg Mdegella of Iringa, Tanzania, Arne and Mary had a vision to build a Lutheran seminary in Tanzania, involving both Tanzanians and Americans in the planning. They became Developmental Missionaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and moved to Tanzania in 1993 to make the seminary become a reality.

Mary and Arne were instrumental in designing, breaking ground, founding, launching, and administering Tumaini University in Iringa, Tanzania (now the

University of Iringa). The institution was officially co-founded in 1995 by Bishop Owdenberg Mdegella, Dr. Arnold Blomquist, and Dr. Mary Blomquist. During the fourteen years that they lived in Tanzania, Mary served as treasurer, chief financial officer, and interim registrar of the school, among other roles. In the early years she wore many hats. She planned meals, purchased supplies, negotiated contracts, and provided planning support. Later, she was responsible for preparing and tracking the University budget, developing financial reporting systems, and raising funds for student scholarships.

After the death of her husband Arne in 2015, Mary worked to make new friends and rekindle old friendships. She eventually reconnected with Edward May, a long-time family friend of Arne and Mary's. On October 30, 2021, Mary and Ed professed their love in a ceremony with the blessing of the Lutheran Church.

In November 2022, Mary and Ed travelled to Tanzania where Mary was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Business Administration as well as the University of Iringa Mount Kilimanjaro Award for "Most Outstanding Contribution as one of the Founders of the University of Iringa".

Silver-haired, intelligent, and beautiful, Mary filled her final years with travel, friendship, and love, remaining active and happy.

Mary's younger brother Robert Osborn passed away the same day, in Washington State. Mary was preceded in death by husband Arnold Blomquist and is survived by her late-life partner Edward May, daughters Katherine Blomquist (and partner Mike Eaton) of Minnesota, Chris Blomquist (and partner Brian Lincoln) of California, and many nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends.

Visitation will be from 12:30 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. on Sat., August 12, 2023 at Zion Lutheran Church in Felch, with Rev. Bryan Laurila officiating the Celebration of Life Service at 1:00 p.m. Burial will be in Felch Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts can be sent in Mary's name to:

Friends of Huruma, which partners with the Huruma Centre Children's Home in Iringa, Tanzania. Online at <https://friendsofhuruma.org/support.html> or checks can be made to "Saint Paul Area Synod" with "Friends of Huruma" in the memo line and mailed to SPAS, 105 University Ave W, St Paul MN 55103 or

Doctors without Borders at <https://doctorswithoutborders.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/make-donation-honor-someone> -- Doctors Without Borders USA, PO Box 5030, Hagerstown MD 21741

A Celebration of Life was held on July 15, 2023 at Augustana Lutheran Church in St Paul, MN (1400 S Robert St, West St Paul MN 55118). Visitation at 3:00 pm; Service at 4:00 pm, Fellowship at 5:00 pm.

# Cemetery Details

## Felch Cemetery

Felch, MI

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JUL 15. 4:00 PM (CT)

Augustana Lutheran Church  
1400 S. Robert St.  
West St. Paul, MN 55118

## Visitation

AUG 12. 12:30 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Zion Lutheran Church  
W4703 Metropolitan Rd  
Felch, MI 49831

## Funeral Service

AUG 12. 1:00 PM (CT)

Zion Lutheran Church  
W4703 Metropolitan Rd  
Felch, MI 49831

# Tribute Wall

CH

“ 3 files added to the album Family



Chris - August 07, 2023 at 04:51 AM



“ Heavenly Heights Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. Mary Marjorie Blomquist.



July 10, 2023 at 01:09 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. Mary Marjorie Blomquist.



July 09, 2023 at 05:01 PM