



## Laretta Jane Ruby

December 31, 1940 - November 19, 2025

Laretta Jane Ruby Sagawa was born December 31, 1940 in Dawson, MN to Clarence Carl Ruby and Martha Jane Townsend Ruby of rural Marietta, MN in Antelope Valley township, Deuel County SD. She lived there through her school years, attending District #42 for grades 1 - 8. She graduated from Marietta High School in 1958, and Northwestern College in St. Paul, MN in 1962. Miss Ruby taught in the music department at Hutchinson, MN for the next 5 years. She took a year off to attend Washington State University in Pullman, WA to complete a degree of Master of Arts in Music Education. She, then, taught orchestra for 2 years in Albert Lea, MN. She completed her career in Osseo, MN, where she continued to teach orchestra for 25 more years. During 1975-1976, Laretta took a year leave of absence to teach Strings and English in Chonju, South Korea at a college there. This was an experience she enjoyed immensely. Although she hoped to extend her time there to 2 years, Osseo School District insisted she return to her position there.

Laretta became a believer in Jesus as her own personal Savior at 9 years of age, at a church camp at Lake Kampeska near Watertown, SD. That was the beginning of a lifelong walk with Jesus. She grew and matured in the faith that was taught by her parents in word and deed. She was baptized in Big Stone Lake on July 12, 1953. This meaning, she identified with the death and resurrection of Jesus and would strive to live as Jesus wanted her to with the

help of the Holy Spirit. She was a member of Woodale Church in Eden Prairie, MN. She participated in Big Groups, Small Groups and Disciple U classes.

On June 17, 1989, Laretta was united in marriage to Burt Kiyoshi Sagawa at Trinity Covenant Church in Crystal, MN. Through this marriage, she became the stepmother of Lisa Kei and Brian Elijah, and Tim Sagawa. She is Grandma Laretta to Brittany Miyo Laeger and her husband, Pat; Kyle-Nathan Kiyoshi Dengerud and his wife, Evelyn, Chrishy Mack and her husband, Alex; and Madison Elijah. She is Great-Grandma Laretta to James (6), Henry (4) and Charlie (17 months) Dengerud; and Barrett Mack (age 4). Laretta met Burt Sagawa and his first wife, Miyo, by volunteering at the Japanese church in Minneapolis, when she was a college student. She taught children and played piano for adult worship services. After Miyo's passing, Laretta and Burt rekindled their friendship at a reunion of the Japanese church. They enjoyed 27 years together by traveling, gardening, going to Orchestra Hall and the Guthrie Theater, enjoying a variety of ethnic restaurants, and family time together.

Laretta loved music and played the piano, violin, and sang. She used all of these abilities often in the churches she attended over the years. She directed church choirs and planned special musical programs for churches. In addition, she played with the Civic Orchestra in Minneapolis for 5 years. Burt was learning to play piano at his age of 92, before he passed in 2016. She played piano for many senior adults including her friends at Presbyterian Homes of Bloomington, where she lived for nearly 5 months. She also loved reading, gardening, nature and reveled in watching birds and other wildlife. After her parents were gone, every 2-3 weeks, she and Burt went to care for the homestead on the farm in South Dakota, where she was raised. Though this became difficult in later years, she always loved being "back on the farm". Laretta enjoyed traveling. In 1972, she took a tour around the world visiting Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Burma, Thailand,

Hong Kong, and Japan. The following year, she visited Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia as well as visiting Hong Kong and Japan again. 1980 found her in Europe. She visited the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, France and England. She traveled to all 50 United States except Alabama. She traveled to all Canadian Provinces except Newfoundland. After her marriage to Burt, they continued to travel in the States and Canada. Their trip to Japan in 2004 was very special as she got to meet Burt's relatives who lived there. These were his sister, 2 nieces, and an elderly aunt by marriage who still lived in Burt's grandfather's house in Shidei on Nagashima Island. They also saw many beautiful and special places on the main island of Honshu. It was special to visit the areas that Burt lived and went to college in Japan. All of these travels she found so enriching by learning about the cultures of each place. Through the love of her husband and his interests, she learned to canoe and they enjoyed a memorable time of camping and canoeing in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

On November 19th, 2025, Laretta traveled to her Home with Jesus. This final destination is her most treasured adventure. She smiled saying, "I'm going to ride my horse, Dolly, with my cat on the back, and ride the streets of gold." She is survived by her sister, Verla (and Bob) Saboe of Bonners Ferry, ID; her nieces and nephews named Jon (and Valory) Saboe, Edythe (and Stewart) Waltner and their daughters Emily and Amanda, Phillip (and Kendall) Saboe, and Phillip's son, Tryston Vogelee; and Amy Saboe. Named above, she is also survived by her stepdaughter, stepson, grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and other relatives. She is survived by "foster daughter", Shanti Chater, her husband, Michael, and their children, Maria and Mark of Kolkata, India. She is preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and her nephew, Tracy Saboe and great nephew, David Paul Waltner We imagine her being welcomed by God's family as a good and faithful servant, singing with the heavenly choirs. Hallelujah!

Thursday, January 8, 2026

11 am Celebration of Life in the Great Room at Woodale Church, Eden Prairie

Noon - Lunch and Memories in the Great Room at Woodale Church, Eden Prairie

4-8:00 pm Visitation Open House in the Community Room at Genesee Apartments in Bloomington.

The service will be livestreamed by the church, starting at 10:45 AM at:

<https://www.wooddale.org/events>

Your charitable donation is referred over flowers. Donation suggestions are Gideon International, Hope Academy of Minneapolis, Bibles for the World. <http://oasisworldministries.org/support-a-ministry/>

[www. Washburn-McReavy.com](http://www.Washburn-McReavy.com)

Werness Brothers Bloomington Chapel

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

JAN 8. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Wooddale Church  
6630 Shady Oak Road  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

## Reception

JAN 8. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Wooddale Church  
6630 Shady Oak Road  
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

## Visitation

JAN 8. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Community Room at Genesee Apartments  
8055 Penn Avenue South  
Bloomington, MN 55431

# Tribute Wall

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“ At her bedside memorial, we sang *Blessed Assurance* and *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*. A caregiver and Director at Presbyterian Homes recalled how the residents enjoyed listening to Laretta play piano. Her son-in-law shared a fun Christmas story. As a family tradition, we sang Christmas hymns and songs. One year, we used an iPad for a small digital keyboard. Grandma played it, and the family sang with Grandpa Burt. Pastor Joe only knew Laretta for a short time, and was blessed to see how she was cared for and loved. When Pastor Joe asked about our family. Lisa began reciting the story, as she often did saying, "Laretta married by dad on June 17, 1989. At that time, I was married with 2 kids. Laretta met my dad when she was a college student, volunteering at the Japanese church. They were married for 27 years."

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**Lisa Dengerud** - November 27, 2025 at 07:01 AM