

Myrna “Babe” Thee Colling

Written by Joan Colling Thompson, and presented by Sue Schulz.

Hello, I am Myrna Lorraine Thee, Brendle, Colling, Burns. I was born May 19, 1926 near May City, Iowa to John and Mathilda (Bielfeldt) Thee. I was welcomed home by my sisters and brothers, Anna “Ann”, John “Jack”, Minnie “Min”, Louise “Lu” and Wilbert “Bud”. My family loved nicknames. I was the baby of the family and that is why most of you know me by my nickname, Babe.

I grew up on the farm helping with whatever chores needed to be done. I never told my mother, but I really did not like threshing season. I would hear the threshing machine coming down the road and knew I was in for a day of cooking, baking, washing dishes and cleaning. We fed the threshers breakfast, lunch, dinner, lunch, and supper with dessert. It seemed like threshing days were always the hottest days of the year.

We had an awesome barn, built by Mennonites, on the farm. It was a grand place to play and explore. My brother, Bud, and I used to climb down on the attached silo and tease the ram until he charged at us. We would then scurry up the silo and the ram would slam into the bottom of the silo. We thought that was living on the edge.

Our farm had a natural spring and the water was delightful. Our house was one of the few in the area that had electricity. It was provided by a series of batteries in the basement.

I attended country schools near Hartley for the first eight grades, and graduated from Hartley High School in 1944. In November of 1944, I married Harlan Brendle. We made our home on a farm outside Hartley, and were blessed with two daughters, Susan Kay and Ronda Lee. Harlan was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s disease and despite treatment at the University of Iowa, he died in 1950.

I then attended Northwestern College in Orange City, received a teaching certificate, and taught in a country school. For many years after I quit teaching, former students would come back to visit me. I always enjoyed that.

I married James Collin in November of 1956. Joining our family was our daughter, Joan Marie. Jim and I went on many adventures in our life together. We traveled to many states and national parks. We loved the outdoors and spent as much time doing outside activities as we could.

We also loved dancing and playing cards. We played Cribbage almost every day. Once I came within one card of a "Perfect Hand." It was exciting, and I have a picture as proof.

Following our marriage, Jim and I purchased the Hartley Dry Cleaners and operated it for over thirty years.

I lost my best friend—Jim—to ALS in 1986. After his death, I worked for several years at Med-Equip.

I was an active member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Hartley. I taught Sunday school and assisted with confirmation classes.

Jim and I were charter members of Meadowbrook Golf and Country Club. I enjoyed playing women's league with my long-time golf "partner in crime," Lu Treimer. Jim and I traveled to many different courses, golfing in couples tournaments.

I enjoyed playing Bridge, and spent many fun and laughter filled afternoons with my Bridge group. I was a member of Y'eltrah Federated Club and The Red Hat Society. I was also active on the Hospital Board, Library Board, and was a Wellness volunteer. For several seasons I enjoyed working with the Community Theater, either behind the scenes or on stage.

One of my proudest accomplishments was serving the City of Hartley as its first woman council member, holding that position from 1980 until 1994. I am very proud of the accomplishments that moved Hartley in a positive direction.

In November of 1991, I married Robert "Bob" Burns at Hartley, Iowa. Bob and I made our home in Hartley. We enjoyed golfing, trips to the casino, and traveling south for the winter months. While Bob assisted with farming, I continued to stay active in the community, volunteering wherever I could.

I passed away at Baum-Harmon Hospital in Primghar, Iowa, on January 27, 2005 from lung and brain cancer.