



Gwendolyn Mae (Castonia) Erickson
1924-2026

Gwen “Gennie” Erickson was born on a farm near Hillsboro, North Dakota, on May 8, 1924. As a child she made several moves with her parents, Mathilde and Wallace Castonia, while her father struggled to find work during the Great Depression.

Gwen was second youngest of four siblings, Dorothy Collins, Moorhead (died 2008); Miriam Erickson, Moorhead (died 2010); and Donald Castonia, Orlando, Florida (died 2009). After Wallace fell ill the family moved to Moorhead where Gwen’s mother took a job at Fairmont Creamery. Gwen graduated from Moorhead High School in 1942. She worked clerical jobs for Fargo businesses, including Royal Jewelers and National Securities, which provided financial services for the Gambles hardware chain.

On February 7, 1948, she married Arthur Erickson. She and Art lived briefly in Grand Forks before returning to Moorhead, where Art built a house in 1950 that became Gwen’s home for nearly three quarters of a century. In 1951 their son Mitchell was born. After Mitch started school Gwen returned to work as a secretary for the Moorhead School System, working in the South Junior High School library. She retired in about 1989. She and Art enjoyed trips to Texas in the winter and in the summer spending time at their Minnesota lake home that Art built on Big Sugar Bush.

Art died at age 95 in 2017. Gwen continued to live in Moorhead where she carried on her mother’s lefse-making tradition, quilted with church friends, played cards, and welcomed friends and relatives for coffee and conversation. She was a member of Bethesda Lutheran Church for more than 80 years. In 2024 the church celebrated her 100th birthday.

Gwen is remembered for her cheerful patience, welcoming nature and selfless devotion to helping relatives and friends through sickness and adversity. In later years she also helped nature, devoting her summers to raising and releasing monarch butterflies. At age 97 that hobby landed her on the front page of the *Forum*, Fargo-Moorhead’s daily newspaper. The story was picked up by other news outlets nationally. She told a reporter then she didn’t like to talk about herself, but hoped others would take up the hobby and help rebuild the endangered monarch population.

In 2025 Gwen moved to a memory care unit in Waconia, Minnesota, to be closer to Mitch.

She died Sept. 2, 2026. She is survived by her son and his wife, Kristine; three grandchildren, Angela, Laura and Justin; and five great grandchildren.