

Arlene Margaret Doris Soxie was born to Robert & Martha Apok on March 9, 1942, in White Mountain, Alaska. She was adopted and raised by Joshua and Nora Ahwinona. Nora was Arlene's paternal aunt. She was fortunate to grow up with siblings from her adopted and biological families. Arlene married Patrick Ongtawasruk in June of 1960 in Wales, Alaska. Together they had 9 children: Deb, 1<sup>st</sup> Ronald, Collins, David, Ronald, Nora, Marci, Henry, & Ed. They adopted one child out and adopted one child from Arlene's brother. They also took in other children, and at one point they moved to Golovin for a couple years or more to help her parents care for other family. Patrick and five of their sons have since passed, and their three daughters and youngest son remain. Arlene and her late husband Patrick have many grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great, great grandchildren.

Arlene's parents, Joshua and Nora were pastors in Northwest Alaska and Nunivak Island. They lived in White Mountain and felt they were called to Koyuk. Arlene remembers leaving by boat, and for her it was a sad time, because she did not want to leave her home. Her papa, Joshua attended bible school in Unalakleet for two years under Reverend Ost. The church sent them from Unalakleet to Mekoryuk. Jesse Moses from Mekoryuk was their guide, and Arlene said, ***"He came all that way to get us, dog team and all."*** It was there that Arlene would learn to speak Cup'ik while playing out with other kids, and then bring home words and phrases to teach her parents, who spoke the Elim and Fish River dialects. Her Papa, Joshua delivered sermons through an interpreter at first, but then he learned the dialect and was able to preach sermons on his own. From Mekoruk they went to Wales. This is where she met and married Patrick Ongtawasruk. Her parents went on to Golovin and moved to Nome after they retired. Looking back, Arlene is amazed at how God always provided for her parents.

Arlene has been singing ever since she can remember. Her mother, Nora never left her with babysitters, and always brought Arlene to different homes where the older women in the community practiced memorizing translated songs by heart. As a young child, Arlene learned and memorized the songs pretty quickly. One of Arlene's favorite hymns is "What God Hath Promised" by Annie Johnson Flint.

When Arlene was 12 years old, her Sunday School Teacher, Katie Tokeinna made a powerful impression on her when she said, ***"As you live your life, be aware of what is happening around you, be careful of how you view your life"***. Katie always ended by saying, ***"God will take care of you."***

Arlene had an interest in nursing, but also knew that opportunities were very limited. The Wales IRA Office was directed to find a local resident to attend Health Aide training and her husband, Patrick asked if she would be willing. After much thought, she agreed. Arlene and her husband had lost two sons, a newborn and a one-year-old within 3 weeks of each other. Losing a newborn made Arlene more determined to try to prevent this from happening to someone else, and she took the necessary steps to become a Community Health Aide. It was a lot of hard work and sacrifice for them as a young couple with a growing family.

On this journey, Arlene completed rigorous medical training, including EMT training. She got to travel and learn from other Health Aides in the Norton Sound area. She shared ***“I really appreciate all my time being a Health Aide, getting to work with and becoming friends with other Health Aides from the region. I appreciate the pilots who flew patients in critical condition from the villages to Nome, even in challenging weather. The community we had was strong. We all learned from one another, and we were there for each other. When times got tough, we called each other for support, and would pray, even in our minds.”*** Arlene dedicated 38 and a half years to being a Health Aide for mostly Wales and Unalakleet, where she lived with her second husband, Francis Soxie. She retired at the age of 60.

Arlene moved to Nome, Alaska in 2013 and has lived there ever since. She is willing to sing whenever families or pastors request it. She believes songs are meant to be shared, and that they lift us up, calm our spirit, and comfort us.

Arlene enjoys knitting to pass her time. She also enjoys going to church and visiting with others. She loves being with her many grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great, great grandchildren.