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Arlene Dunn, 76, Taught Second Grade at Tokeneke School, Ran a Preschool, Active in Church

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Date : November 14, 2021

Arlene Roberta Dunn passed away peacefully on Oct. 22, 2021, at Providence Mission Hospital, Mission Viejo, California, surrounded by her loving husband, Thomas J. Dunn, her son, Brian T. Dunn and his love, Ambrea Tafoya, as well as her Pastor, Jim Szeyller of Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church. She was 76.

Arlene was born Sept. 28, 1945 at Christ Hospital, Jersey City, New Jersey, to her parents Gladys M. Brassel (Buchlein) and Warren Ralph Brassel. Her sister, Kathleen Brassel of Seattle, Washington, and her brother,

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Warren Brassel of Hansville, Washington completes her immediate family. Arlene was an especially proud Nana to Dylan Thomas Dunn, Brian's 10-year-old son.

He made her life whole and put endless joy into her heart. In her first eight years of life, Arlene grew up in North Bergen, New Jersey. When she was in the fourth grade the family moved to a new home in Tenafly, New Jersey. She attended Tenafly elementary and high schools, graduating Cum Laude from Fairleigh Dickinson University with a major in Elementary Education and a minor in English.

Upon graduation she taught second and fifth grades in Fairlawn, New Jersey. In April 1968, Arlene met Tom at Tom Swifts Tavern, a famous young adult night spot in Ft. Lee, New Jersey by the George Washington Bridge.

Tom asked for her hand in marriage on her birthday in September 1968. They married July 19, 1969, at Society of African Missions (SMA) American Province in Tenafly and honeymooned in Bermuda beginning July 20, 1969.

Her husband often remarked that their marriage was a bigger accomplishment than NASA landing a man on the moon. The Dunns moved to Stamford, and Arlene taught second grade for the next five years in Tokeneke Elementary school in Darien.

During these years Arlene earned her education Master's Degree from the University of Bridgeport. In 1974 they moved to a new home in Old Tappan, New Jersey. She began teaching first and second grades in her childhood town of Tenafly, New Jersey.

Her black lab, Jersey Jake and her yellow lab, Brenden, provided endless walks joyfully meeting new neighbors and forming lifelong friendships. On Sept. 30, 1978, her son Brian was born, and she chose to become a stay-at-home mom a job that pleased her immensely.

As Brian entered elementary school, she became the classroom mother every year and a constant volunteer in the school library. Soon she became a substitute for the next ten years, as well as, the Story Hour teacher for the Old Tappan Library.

At her faith community of Trinity Reformed Church, she ran a preschool program for 25-30 children. Sunday school was another pleasure. Arlene was the first female Elder which she modestly embraced. Always the volunteer she supported the Old Tappan Little League and Scouting programs.

Pinewood Derbys, blue and Gold dinners, camping trips, Yankee game outings, and truck races provided countless hours of fun. As Brian entered high school, she continued her volunteer support for his sports.

The year 1996 presented her husband an opportunity to accept a promotion as a vice president of sales and marketing for a division of McCormick and Company, Inc./Setco, prompting their move to a new home in Laguna Niguel, California. The family moved in July 1997.

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Brian graduated Old Tappan High School, New Jersey in June 1997 and soon entered upon his University of Colorado/Boulder college career in August of that year and graduated with a B.A. in communications.

Arlene settled into her new community joining the Saddleback Newcomers, her faith community of the Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church (LNPC) and cherished her 2002 acceptance into the Philanthropic Education Organization (P.E.O.) sisterhood which gave her enormous joy and camaraderie.

She became an active congregation member of LNPC serving in numerous capacities over twenty-four years choir member, deacon, elder, session member, and faithful bible study member. She especially enjoyed the many overseas choir performance trips to Austria, Scotland, Italy, and Spain.

A Holy Land Pilgrimage to Israel in 2017 hosted by Pastor Jim Szeyller was a supreme highlight for Arlene and Tom's faith journey.

A celebration of Life for Arlene will be held at 11 a.m., Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021, at Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution in Arlene's memory to the Laguna Niguel Presbyterian Church's Music Ministries, 30071 Ivy Glenn Drive, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677 or to your favorite charity in Arlene's memory.

— [an obituary](#) posted by the Orange County Register on Legacy.com, where online condolences may be left