

Arrvola Van Deusen, 85, traveled the world during showbiz career

Show business was practically Arrvola Van Deusen's lifeline, especially as a child.

She began performing in vaudeville shows not long after she could walk, and during the next 25 years she traveled the world performing in theaters and supper clubs and on radio and television.

Van Deusen, of DeLand, died Saturday of complications from Parkinson's disease. She was 85.

"She was singing and playing instruments on stage by herself at the age of 3. She played the xylophone and danced," said her son Billy Van Deusen of Bokeelia. "She had a God-given talent that she worked at and became quite good. She was adopted by a show-business family."

Performing under the name "Baby Oxman," the name of her adopted family, Van Deusen shared the same stage with a variety of stars, including Katharine Hepburn, her son said.

"She split a bill with Katharine Hepburn on a musical revue. It was by herself as Baby Oxman," he said. "She was featured playing her xylophone."

After performing for years with her adopted family, Van Deusen ran away when she was 17 to marry Burton Van Deusen Sr., who also was a performer.

Learning different aspects of show business through years of experience, "Van & Arrvola" -- the couple's stage name -- performed across the United States as well as Europe, Asia and Japan.

"They went to mostly big cities. They did comedy, talk, Mom played the xylophone, and they sang and danced," Billy Van Deusen said. "They weren't the headliners. They were backups to the main act and would perform before the headliners."

Arrvola Van Deusen
Submitted by Karen Alpert Entous March 19, 2017

The couple moved to Miami in the mid-1940s and decided to settle down and raise their family. While her husband opened a theatrical agency to book acts for the large hotels in Miami, Van Deusen opened a dance school and involved herself in community activities.

She served as president and director of the Iham Ladies Club of Miami, a women's branch of the Mahi Shrine Temple.

"She choreographed a lot of the shows that they put on to raise money for crippled children," Van Deusen said. "My father was a Shriner and he was involved with that, and they were very actively involved with the community, and that was part of it."

Van Deusen worked with other women's organizations throughout Florida and helped organize and choreograph their shows.

"She worked with the local people that were club members. She would practice with them and get a lineup of different acts together and put on a show with the people that were in the club," her son said. "It was all for raising money to help others."

She moved to Melbourne in the early 1970s and became a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. After many years in Melbourne, she moved to Leesburg and became commander of the local Coast Guard Auxiliary. She also taught children in Lake County schools about safe boating.

She also is survived by her husband; another son, Burton Van Deusen Jr. of Long Island, N.Y.; and two grandchildren.

Lankford Funeral Home, DeLand, is handling arrangements.

Arrvola Van Deusen
Submitted by Karen Alpert Entous March 19, 2017



Orlando Sentinel, The (FL) - Thursday, August 10, 2006

CITE THIS RECORD

"Orlando Sentinel, The", Florida, GenealogyBank.com

(<http://www.genealogybank.com/doc/obituaries/obit/1136CC66B2AB5428-1136CC66B2AB5428> : accessed 19 March 2017)

Arrvola Van Deusen, 85, traveled the world during showbiz career