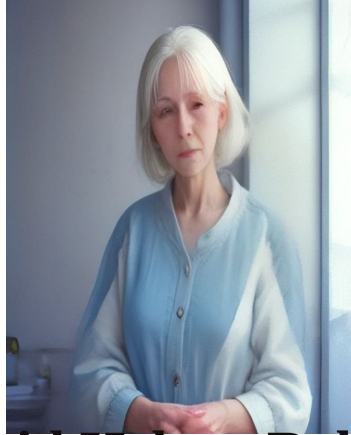




Astrid Helene Bakken

June 28, 1945 - September 1, 2026

St. Cloud, Minnesota

Astrid Helene Bakken died in St. Cloud on September 1, 2026. She was eighty-one. Born there on June 28, 1945, she grew up in a house where Norwegian was for the kitchen and English was for the street, and she kept both. She became a hospital cook because the granite city was hiring and because she had already learned, at home, that a hot meal is a form of keeping people upright.

She spent twenty-eight years in a county-hospital kitchen, first washing hotel pans that never quite came clean, later running a breakfast that had to catch night nurses who arrived after the count. She kept a second carton of milk for the aide who came in late. She seasoned commodity beans as if the warehouse had meant them to taste like something. On the mornings the buses ran late she still opened the steam table.

She married Nils Bakken in 1966. He drove a laundry truck and died in 2005. They raised a daughter and a son in a bungalow with a maple that dropped more work than shade. After Nils was gone she kept his saucer on the drainboard for a season, then gave it to a granddaughter who liked cereal at odd hours. She sang alto in a choir that rehearsed on Wednesdays whether anyone new showed up or not.

People on her block remember a woman who would freeze extra lefse in coffee cans and leave them on porches after a funeral. She disliked a speech, loved a clean steam table, and could tell you which year the hall switched from square pizza to the round kind the nurses would actually finish. She died in St. Cloud, in weather she had always said was honest. The line still opens. Someone else will count the milk.

Services

A gathering at her church hall in St. Cloud. Friends may bring a covered dish. A gift to a hospital meal fund is

welcome.

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