

Arthur S. Myklebust

May 24, 1908 – May 12, 1978



Arthur S. Myklebust, age 69, passed away on May 12, 1978, at Sioux Valley Hospital in Sioux Falls, SD. A lifelong educator and civic leader, he is best remembered for his extraordinary 34-year tenure as superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Deaf—a position he held from 1939 until his retirement in 1973. His leadership spanned generations and left a lasting mark on Deaf education across the state.

Born in Lester, Iowa, and raised in Jasper, Minnesota, Arthur pursued a career in education that would shape thousands of lives. He earned his degrees from Augustana College and Gallaudet College, later marrying his beloved wife, Agnes E. Lee, on June 21, 1933. Together, they made SDSD not just a school, but a community.

Beyond SDSD, Arthur remained an active and respected leader in both civic and educational circles. He served as district governor of the Minnesota-Dakota Kiwanis International, vice president of the Sons of Norway, and was honored with the *Distinguished Alumni Award* from Augustana College and the *Service to Mankind Award* from the Sioux Empire Sertoma Club. He played key roles in developing the Deaf education program at Augustana College and contributed to the construction of the Chapel of the Hills in the Black Hills.

Arthur was also a board member of Nordic Hall, chairman of the Sioux Empire Gem and Mineral Society, and remained deeply involved in Lutheran community initiatives throughout his life. His influence extended far beyond education—he was a builder of programs, institutions, and relationships that continue to flourish.

Funeral services were held at First Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, and he was laid to rest at Rest of the Hills. Arrangements were provided by Miller Funeral Home.

Arthur's memory endures not only in awards and buildings, but in the lives of students, families, and educators whose paths were shaped by his vision, kindness, and unwavering dedication.



Superintendent Arthur S. Myklebust (1939–1973)



34 Years of Vision, Modernization, and Devotion at SDSD

Arthur S. Myklebust became the ninth superintendent of the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD) in August 1939 and led the school for 34 years, retiring in June 1973. His long tenure marked a period of major transformation, community building, and modernization at the school.

Early Life and Career

Born in Lester, Iowa in 1908 and raised in Jasper, Minnesota, Myklebust graduated from Augustana College (1930) and earned his master's degree from Gallaudet College (1933). Before coming to SDSD, he taught and coached at schools in South Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, and Iowa. His understanding of the Deaf community was personal—two of his siblings, Joe and Bertha, were Deaf—and his brother, Dr. Helmer Myklebust, became a noted scholar in audiology and psychology of deafness. This deep family connection helped shape Arthur's empathy and vision for Deaf education.

Transforming SDSD

When Myklebust arrived, SDSD was still operating much as it had decades earlier. He immediately began raising educational standards, replacing outdated Yale teaching charts with textbooks and modern methods that challenged students to learn and communicate more effectively.

Under his leadership, the school added an audiologist, psychologist, and speech therapist, forming what became the Special Services Center—a pioneering approach that extended support not only to students but also to Deaf and hard-of-hearing people statewide.

He also introduced individual hearing aids, advanced classroom materials, and updated teaching philosophies focused on equal opportunity and academic excellence rather than manual labor.

Campus Growth and Major Projects

Throughout his administration, Myklebust oversaw extensive changes to the SDSD campus:

- End of the School Farm (1949): Once an integral part of SDSD, the farm covered land stretching to modern-day Eastway Bowling Alley. With Sioux Falls expanding and World War II creating labor shortages, Myklebust led the effort to sell the farm. The proceeds allowed development of athletic fields, playgrounds, and new facilities—a move that symbolized the school's transition from labor training to full academic education.
- New Boys' Dormitory (1947): A \$100,000 project, this was the first major new building on campus since early days, offering modern living and study spaces. It was later named Krohn Hall.
- Sherman Infirmary (1962): Myklebust worked for years to secure state funding for a proper health facility, replacing the unsafe "hospital" above the boiler room. The new infirmary provided full medical care and a residence for the school nurse.





The swimming pool.

- Arthur S. Myklebust Recreational Center (1971): His final major project—a \$250,000 swimming pool and gymnasium addition—expanded physical education programs for all students, including those with multiple disabilities. It was later named in his honor.

Additional campus improvements included new greenhouses, modernized classrooms, sprinklers, and audiovisual equipment—each reflecting his commitment to safety, modernization, and student enrichment.

Partnerships and Outreach

Myklebust believed in expanding Deaf education beyond the SDSD campus. He supported a teacher-training partnership with Augustana College, the first accredited four-year program in Deaf education in the U.S. (established in the early 1950s).

In 1972, he initiated SDSD's first statewide outreach program, enabling families and schools across South Dakota to access Deaf education resources and support—an idea ahead of its time.

Leadership and Legacy

Arthur and his wife Agnes, both former teachers, made SDSD their home. Agnes was known for her hospitality, PTA leadership, and volunteer work—often hosting staff events, helping in classrooms, and creating a family atmosphere for faculty and students alike. During Arthur's tenure, 458 students graduated, and SDSD earned respect statewide as a place of excellence. His leadership style combined practicality with compassion; he was known for perseverance, diplomacy, and deep devotion to the school community.

After his retirement in 1973, Arthur and Agnes remained in Sioux Falls. He passed away in 1978, remembered for transforming SDSD into a modern educational institution and a nurturing environment for generations of Deaf and hard-of-hearing South Dakotans.



Myklebust and his wife, Agnes, had a great interest in botany, as seen in this 1973 clipping.



Myklebust was an avid outdoorsman. Here he is seen displaying the bounty of one of his hobbies.