

Frances Evangeline Johnson was born August 4, 1925, the second eldest child of Harold F. and Annie J.D. Johnson. She grew up in Nelson, MN and loved life in that small town. She and her siblings were particularly close well beyond childhood.

Fran graduated from the 8th grade from Nelson School District 103 and from Central High School in Alexandria in 1943. High school years for Fran were a lot of fun. She met the love of her life, Eugene Engstrom, Jr. in her Junior year and they went to the Junior and Senior proms together. Right after graduation, Gene enlisted in the Army and was off to the South Pacific, and Fran took her first job working at the Douglas County Extension Office.

In 1944 Fran and her younger sister, Delores, along with her friend, Irene Johnsrud moved to Washington, D.C. Fran took a job with the FBI in the Finger Printing Division. The year was a fun diversion while she waited for "Inky" to come home from the war. These three gals from Nelson, MN became a part of history as they stood with thousands who lined the motorcade route for the funeral of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

When Fran came home from Washington in 1945, she took a job at Central High School as a secretary for Principal, Cliff Rykken. Unbeknownst to Fran, this job started a 36-year career with School District 206. During her years with the District she worked for CB Rykken, George Anderson, John Peterson, Dr. Keith Redfield and Dr. Pernel Knutson. She loved hearing the first bell ring for the start of classes each fall. Fran retired from District 206 in 1990.

Gene was seriously wounded on the Island of Luzon in the Philippines on March 3, 1945 and spent the next eight months winding his way home through a series of hospitals finally getting back to Minneapolis. While he was home on medical leave Fran and Inky decided to get married on Sunday, August 4, 1946, Fran's 21st birthday. Fran and Gene bought their first home in Nelson and lived there their entire marriage raising their three children, Richard, Ann and Jim.

On February 29, 1976 the bottom of Fran's world dropped out when Inky died at home very suddenly. Putting one foot in front of the other, Fran thankfully had 12-year-old Jim to raise. She learned how to drive a car among other "firsts." In 1979 Fran bought a home near Lake Darling. Fran's mother, Annie moved in with her and son, Jim and everyone enjoyed this new living arrangement. Grandma Ann eventually moved into Knute Nelson when she needed more care. In 1995 Fran sold her home to Al and Ann and moved into a townhouse where she lived for 17 years. In 2013, Fran moved into Arabella, and then into Edgewood Assisted Living in 2019.

Fran was a lifelong member of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Nelson, very active in the women's groups, past chairperson and treasurer of the church and parish councils, a member of the VFW Auxiliary, the Douglas County Historical Society, a peer counselor for the Elder Network and was inducted into Douglas County Hall of Fame in 1994. Upon retiring in 1990, Fran began volunteering at the Douglas County Historical Society where she spent countless hours transcribing oral history of Douglas County residents.

Fran and Inky enjoyed golfing in Osakis, sun fishing on East Lake Geneva (down in front of Howard Johnson's place in the celery weeds) and going dancing with Engelbrecht's and Gustafson's every Saturday night at Lakeside in Glenwood or the Algon Ballroom where they loved to jitterbug. They also enjoyed traveling, taking many memorable trips with family and friends.

Among the many joys and blessings in Fran's life include her granddaughters, Tiffany and Autumn, and her great-grandchildren, Jack, Brock, Grace and Luke. She loved spending time with them and watching them grow.

Fran passed into her new life on November 29, 2020 at the age of 95 years. She was a generous, kind-hearted woman who leaves behind a legacy of love. Blessed be her memory.

Fran is survived by her children Richard Engstrom of Luverne, MN, Ann Esterberg of Alexandria, MN and Jim (Darla) Engstrom of Alexandria, MN, granddaughter Tiffany (Ken) Marthaler and their son, Brock of Osakis, MN, granddaughter Autumn (Jared) Lindenfesler and their children, Jack, Grace and Luke of Albertville, MN and many nieces and nephews.

Fran was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, Gene, her sisters, June Hanson (2006), Delores Johnson (2011), Myrna Max (2009) and brother, Jim Johnson (1996) and her "favorite son-in-law," Al Esterberg.

Remembering the Life Of



Frances E. Engstrom

1925 - 2020

In Loving Memory of

Frances E. Engstrom

August 4, 1925 † November 29, 2020

Visitation

Anderson Funeral Home

Alexandria, Minnesota

Wednesday, December 2, 2020

4:00 – 7:00 PM

Urn Bearers

Tiffany Marthaler

Autumn Lindenfesler

Honorary Urn Bearers

Jack Lindenfesler

Brock Marthaler

Grace Lindenfesler

Luke Lindenfesler

Burial

Kinkead Cemetery

Alexandria, Minnesota

So grieve a while for me,

If grieve you must

Then let your grief be

Comforted by trust

It's only for a while that

We must part

So bless

The memories

Within

Your heart.

