



Harriet Joan Esse

January 23, 1929 - May 10, 2025

Dateline: Spring Grove, MN

Harriet Joan Esse, 96, of Spring Grove MN was called to her Heavenly home on Saturday, May 10, 2025, at Gundersen Tweeten Health Care with her loving caregiver by her side.

Harriet Joan Fritz was born January 23, 1928, in Albert Lea, MN. She was the seventh of eight children born to Pastor Charles and Pauline (Peterson) Fritz. She was baptized, confirmed and married by her father.

Harriet graduated from high school in Cook, MN in 1947. She began a two-year teaching program at Luther College, Decorah IA.

Although the details may have changed a bit over the years, Harriet loved to tell the story of how she and Jim met during her first week of college. Due to a recent flood in Decorah, all students had to receive a tetanus shot. Harriet was waiting alone in the shot line and Jim came up to her and asked if he could join her. The rest, as they say, is history. While students at Luther, they traveled the country with the Nordic Choir and so began a lifetime filled with the love of music and each other.

Harriet taught elementary school in Wells MN 1949-1950.

Harriet and Jim were married on December 28, 1950. They lived in Lake Mills MN after their wedding, moving to St James MN in 1954 when Jim was offered a teaching job. Loren, Steve, Jon and Carolyn were born in Minnesota. The family moved to San Diego CA for Jim to attend graduate school. Jim was offered a teaching job and the family moved to Palo Alto CA in 1962. Alan was

born in California.

Harriet was a loving and dedicated mother. She was the “glue that held everything together” and she and Jim provided a secure, nurturing and loving childhood to their five children. As their children grew towards going their separate ways, they were encouraged to pursue their dreams and follow their desired paths.

Then the fun really began for Harriet and Jim! They pursued their dreams of what they wanted to do after raising five children.

They trained for and realized their dream of riding bicycles from Spring Grove MN to the east coast and back. They retired to Magalia CA and enjoyed country living.

Harriet and Jim were full-time RVers for eight years. They spent time wherever they wanted to be and where they could be helpful, and made lifelong friends along the way. They worked at campgrounds in northern Minnesota and Florida. They loved their RV home.

Harriet and Jim eventually moved into an apartment in Albert Lea MN. Harriet was supporting Jim through the various stages of Alzheimer’s disease, and they chose to settle in Spring Grove MN in 2005.

Harriet was thrilled that her sister, Mae, moved to Spring Grove and lived close by for several years.

Harriet and Jim were married for 56 years until Jim passed away in 2007.

Harriet loved being a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Spring Grove. She joined the choir and felt a strong sense of community from fellow choir and congregation members. They always made her feel welcome and cared for and continued to be supportive of her throughout the remainder of her time on this earth. Bless you all.

Harriet is survived by Loren Esse of Des Moines IA, Steven (Denise) Esse of Sacramento CA, Jon (Lynette) Esse of Warrenton VA, Carolyn Olson of Spring Grove MN, Alan Esse of San Antonio TX (Jane and family in England), sixteen grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren and many nieces and

nephews.

Harriet was preceded in death by her husband Jim, her parents, four sisters: Sylvia Frerichs, Margaret Olsen, Mae Skindlov, Nancy Christian, and three brothers, Paul Fritz, Eliel Fritz, John Fritz. She was also preceded in death by her son-in-law, Spencer Olson, and daughter-in-law, Catherine Esse.

Harriet and her family have been deeply blessed and touched by those in Spring Grove who have loved and cared for her, always asking about her even when she was unable to spend time out in the community.

Thank you to the Trinity choir and congregation members. Mom's deep love of music found a home at Trinity and she forever felt a part of her church family.

Thank you, Pastor Lane and Pastor Jim, for visits and services brought to the Assisted Living and Tweeten. Thank you, Bonnie, for playing the piano.

Thank you, Alan and Judy Roble, for your support with arrangements.

Thank you, caregivers at Spring Grove Assisted Living. You supported Mom being as independent as possible and loved her and the other residents through the pandemic.

Thank you, teachers, day care providers and parents, who bring children and pets to visit residents at the Assisted Living and the Care Center. They bring joy to everyone.

Thank you to everyone working at Gundersen Tweeten Care Center and through Heartland Hospice. Mom cared about you all and loved telling you her stories, singing her songs, whistling and humming. You cared for her physical and health needs, you fed her, you laundered her clothing, you kept her home clean, you maintained the building, you provided activities and you came to visit. You also cared for her spirit and her soul, getting to know her even if you were there for only a short time. You helped her transition to memory care and her family will always be truly thankful for all of you.

Funeral service: Monday June 23, 2025, at 11:00 at Trinity Lutheran Church,

Spring Grove MN

Visitation: Monday June 23, 2025, 10:00-11:00 also at Trinity

Interment: At a later date in Albert Lea, MN

In lieu of flowers, please support music and the arts at Spring Grove School
the youth at Spring Grove area churches and the food shelf.

Cemetery Details

Burial at a later date

Previous Events

Memorial visitation

JUN **23**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Trinity Lutheran Church
203 E. Main St.
Spring Grove, MN 55974

Memorial Service

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