



## Mildred Strasser

August 1, 1917 - August 27, 2009

Like a vibrant rainbow painted across the sky, Mildred Strasser brought loving color to the everyday melodies of life. She was a talented pianist who used her creative gifts to inspire the many students who graced her classroom, shaping future generations for years to come. Mildred treasured her family, and in her home, learning and creativity prevailed - laced with just the right amount of grace and love. She shared a rich and fulfilling marriage with the love of her life, and was proud of the legacy that was an outpouring of their love story which spanned more than 60 years. On August 1, 1917, Frederick and Marie (Atkinson) Shartell, of Detroit, Michigan, were celebrating the birth of their daughter, Mildred Alice. Mildred's father owned Shartell's Garage, was a test driver for a local automobile manufacturer, and even played ball for minor league clubs. Mildred attended local schools and graduated from Detroit Southeastern High School in 1935. She then continued her education, and although she was a talented pianist, decided to pursue a career in education. In 1939, Mildred graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor of Education Degree in Music. It was also during her formative years that Mildred became friends with the man who would eventually hold the key to her heart. His name was John Strasser and his family attended East Grand Boulevard Methodist Church where Mildred and her family were also members. Both families were actively involved in the church leading Mildred and John to become very good friends. Eventually their friendship blossomed into true love, and they married while John was home on leave from the Army on July

8, 1942. John held his beloved in his arms throughout the ceremony, supporting her and trying to ease her pain as she was recovering from appendicitis. Due to John's narrow window of time on leave, they had decided to continue on with the wedding in spite of the medical emergency. The newlyweds were only able to share a short ride together after the wedding, and then Mildred returned home to continue with her recovery while John returned to his station in California. A few weeks later, Mildred's mother accompanied the young bride to California to present her to her beloved husband. Although the time they spent in California was short, it had a lifelong impact on them and later their family, becoming a cherished memory. Eventually, Mildred and John enjoyed a belated honeymoon at the Grand Canyon, another location that they returned to later to share with their family. When John was discharged from the military, the couple settled together in Detroit where Mildred resumed her teaching career, first teaching kindergarten in Hazel Park, before moving over to the Jamieson Elementary School located in inner city Detroit. Mildred was very proud of the opportunity she had to develop a creative spirit in art and music in the lives of her students, in spite of being in the midst of a violent time in Detroit. At times, Mildred escorted her students home from school due to the threat of the violence that surrounded them. In the midst of her efforts touching the lives of her students, Mildred and John were blessed with two daughters of their own, Marilyn and Elizabeth. Mildred loved nurturing her girls just as she did her students. In addition to Mildred's job as a teacher and John's job within the automobile industry, they operated a marina near Algonac for several years. They purchased a cabin cruiser named "Griffin," after the first boat operated under its own power on the Great Lakes. Many precious memories were created in the Strasser family aboard their boat as they spent several family vacations cruising the Great Lakes - from Montreal to Chicago. The Strasser family also enjoyed trips out west and to the east coast, experiencing much more than a vacation as their adventures also provided the backdrop for learning experiences and experimentation with nature. Usually their family did

not go to the typical vacation spots, but greatly enjoyed finding unique places that were off the beaten path, traveling in the family station wagon. Mildred and John took their daughters on a return visit to the Grand Canyon where they took a pack trip down into the bottom of the canyon. The girls often joked that the trip would have been easier walking themselves, rather than trying to ride the mules! When Mildred and John took Marilyn back to Texas each year, they made an adventure out of those trips as well, usually taking their time over a period of a week or two. Music and arts were always important components in the Strasser family, and through the years, Marilyn and Elizabeth were encouraged and privileged to make several art pieces for Mildred to decorate her classroom. Mildred was truly a passionate teacher and she worked hard to improve the reading skills of her students. She was highly respected within her community for bringing art, music, and culture to the classroom during tough social times. Mildred was awarded with a Lifetime Teaching Certificate in Primary Education for her many years in teaching, retiring from Jamieson in 1980. Since John retired right around the same time as Mildred, the couple moved to a home that John built in Fountain near their daughter Elizabeth and her family. They loved the flowers and wildlife around their home, so they further accented these attributes by planting trees and flowers, creating a wildlife refuge. Their home also boasted large windows throughout, allowing them to experience the virtual sanctuary right outside. Then in 1994, Mildred and John moved to the warmer climes of Sarasota, Florida. While their grandson Joshua was in Florida attending college, he often visited them on weekends, and of course they spoiled him by taking care of his laundry, baking him cookies, and just relaxing on the front porch. When her beloved John died in 2003, his "Darling Brown Eyes" Mildred moved back to Fountain in 2006 to be with Elizabeth, and continued to embrace her life and family. When her grandson Christopher graduated from law school in Hawaii, Mildred finally engaged in the great adventure of flying to ensure she was able to share this important occasion. Mildred enjoyed time spent on

various excursions, one of her favorites being a trip to Dairy Queen to pick up ice cream, then on to watch the SS Badger making its way through the harbor, reminiscing about family trips on the "Griffin." One of her last road trips was a leisurely drive up north, taking in the many lovely small towns and the landscape along the way, ending with a treat of warm cherry pie to finish off the day. In so many ways, Mildred Strasser impacted the hearts and lives of those around her, whether she was keeping in touch with friends and family through her beautifully written letters, or bringing the arts to life within the walls of her school. Whether in Mildred's home or classroom, messes were always allowed as long as creativity was being nurtured. Mildred will be dearly missed by all those she leaves behind, but her fingerprints will remain forever. Mildred Strasser died on Thursday, August 27, 2009. She will be lovingly remembered by her daughters, Marilyn (Donald) Olson of Manchaca, Texas, Elizabeth Ann (Daniel) Stark of Fountain; her grandchildren, Christopher Andrew Olson of Hawaii, Jonathon Michael Stark of Fountain, and Joshua Lee (Erin) Stark of Florida. A Memorial service to celebrate Mildred's life and faith will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 1 at the Scottville United Methodist Church with Rev. Jack Conklin officiating. A time of visitation will be held at the church from 10:00 a.m. until the time of the service. Those who wish, may make contributions to the Music Department of the Scottville United Methodist Church, or the Mason—Lake Adult Education program in memory of Mildred.