

Ruth Joyce Samson



Ruth Joyce Samson, 93 years old, of Grinnell, Iowa, passed away on December 23, 2024, after a very full and happy life.

To her friends and family, Ruth was a rock star and she made everyone feel like they were the most important person in her life. She was her children's biggest cheerleader and encouraged them to follow their interests wherever they might lead... except for piano lessons, which were mandatory for everyone in the family.

Ruth was a consummate host and her children's friends were always welcomed into the home, regardless of day or time. Ruth was quite famous for her lasagna

dinners and she enjoyed feeding her kid's high school or college sport teams, fraternity brothers, or friends just passing through town. She made sure no one would leave her house with an empty stomach. Because of her steadfast belief that no person should have to go hungry, especially those living in the Midwest - the breadbasket of the world - it was a natural progression for Ruth to lend her support to the Food Bank of Iowa and Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA) during her later years. Every summer, RAGBRAI was another opportunity for Ruth to ensure family riders from California, Colorado, Indiana, and Virginia had a central place to unite and celebrate their accomplishments.

Ruth was rarely idle and preferred to stay active in some form or fashion. She was a voracious reader, and it was not unusual for her to be reading two to three books at a time, followed by stimulating and energetic discussions. Over the years, Ruth gifted more than 70 hand-knitted Christmas stockings to family and friends (and friends of friends) and at least 54 quilts to commemorate births, graduations, and other special occasions. Ruth excelled in the vanishing art of letter writing and preferred to mail personalized notes to friends and family. If you had an upcoming birthday, anniversary, or special occasion, you could always count on a greeting card from Ruth containing an update about her family, current events, or whatever was on her mind.

Community meant everything to Ruth and she cherished her dear friends from near and far. She relished spending time at Levart, playing in multiple bridge clubs, swimming with Pfitsch's Phishes, volunteering at the food pantry, Mayflower Home, Welcome Wagon and Grinnell Medical Center, baking and delivering cinnamon rolls and cookies during holidays, and providing meals to friends and neighbors in the hospital.

Iowa has always been Ruth's home. She was born in Grand Junction, and lived in Ogden, Boone, Onawa, and Grinnell. She was a graduate of Onawa High School in 1949 and St. Elizabeth's Hospital School of Nursing, Lincoln, Nebraska in 1952. On December 28, 1952, she was united in marriage to Robert Samson.

After graduating from nursing school, Ruth worked for Doctor Gaukel in Onawa until 1955. The Samson's relocated to Grinnell, Iowa, in 1964 where Ruth focused on raising her family of four children: Christopher Robert, Douglas Scott, Suellen Mary, and Tracy Ann. Ruth resumed her career in 1970 as a school nurse at Grinnell Junior High School until her retirement in 1990.

As with so many people, Ruth loved Frank Sinatra and was a fan of all artists of the big band era. It was a safe bet that Sinatra would be playing on Sirius in her car or in the background at home. So, it should not be a surprise that Frank was crooning to her as she passed peacefully on December 23 after her courageous fight with cancer.

Ruth is survived by her brother David Albert Carlson; her children Christopher (Lisa) of Urbandale, Iowa, Douglas of Durham, North Carolina, Suellen of Indianapolis, Indiana, and Tracy Boddicker (Kevin Funkhouser) of Berryville, Virginia; her cherished grandchildren Erin (Phillip) Ramsey, Megan Samson, Lauren (Nick) Onken, Kaylin (Ben) Hokanson-Fasig, Miles Hokanson, Adam (Kelly) Boddicker, Austin (Pam Pelto) Boddicker, and Annie Boddicker; and her beloved great-grandchildren Larae, Beckham, and Oakley Ramsey, Lillian, Addison, and Oliver Boddicker, and Ada Onken.

She was preceded in death by her husband Robert Milo Samson, father George Leonard Carlson, mother Mary Catherine French Carlson, sister Marjorie Jean Carlson Buckley, and brother George Robert Carlson.

A celebration of Ruth's life will be held on April 26, 2025. Visitation will be at Smith Funeral Home in Grinnell, Iowa, at 9:30 a.m., with a service beginning at 10:00 a.m. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions in memory of Ruth be directed to St. Francis Manor Foundation or MICA-Grinnell to fight food hunger. Checks can be mailed to Smith Funeral Home, PO Box 368, Grinnell, IA 50112.