



Frances LaRue Wells-Picken

December 6, 1920 - September 12, 2024

Frances Wells-Picken, 103, of Oskaloosa, passed away on September 12, 2024, at the Mahaska Health Hospice Serenity House.

Frances LaRue Vermillion, daughter of Fred Leroy and Minnie May Deshler Vermillion, was born December 6, 1920, in Oskaloosa, Iowa. She attended Oskaloosa schools through the second grade. In 1928, her mother died when Frances was only seven years old. After her mother's funeral service, her father consented to a two-week stay the coming summer with her mother's friends, Tom and Esther Randell Gullick of Wright, IA. They had lost a daughter, Frances' age, and had another daughter, Gladys, one year younger than Frances. The two weeks turned into a whole summer, and Frances continued to stay with the Gullick family and attend school in Cedar with Gladys through High School, graduating in 1938. The Gullicks loved Frances as one of their own; she was treated like a real family member in every respect, and Gladys was Frances' only "sister". When she could help, she spent time with Esther's sister's family, David and Mary Gwin, who lived 3 ½ miles south of Cedar. Mary was equally kind, and Frances learned many things from her. As a result, a bond of affection with the Randells and the Moores – their relatives - remained throughout her life.

Following high school, Frances married Claude Gordon Wells on July 31, 1938, at the Little Brown Church in Nashua, IA. Frances earned a teaching certificate from Wm. Penn College and taught 6th Grade in New Sharon from 1957 to 1959. She returned to Wm. Penn, where she earned a degree in

Elementary Education in 1961, subsequently teaching 9th grade at Oskaloosa Junior High through 1976. Claude died in January 1978 after 39 years of marriage. She was blessed to become reacquainted with a Cedar High School classmate, Donald Picken; they were married on September 9, 1988, in Estes Park, CO. They resided in Oskaloosa and spent many winters in Clearwater, FL. Donald died on December 4, 2006.

Frances was a lifetime member of the Mahaska County Historical Society and the Mahaska Humane Society; a 50-year member in 1992 of the Eastern Star, Universe Chapter 105 in What Cheer; Delta Kappa Gamma- Rho Chapter of Oskaloosa; Chapter IO of P.E.O. and Central United Methodist Church. She loved classical music, enjoyed playing golf, reading, and being with family and friends.

Her memory will be cherished by daughter Sue Ellen Wells of Franklin, WI, and an "adopted daughter" Judy Luellwitz of Franklin, WI; her grandchildren: Jo Dee Amundson of Ames, IA, James Shawn DeReus of Georgia, and Jon Richard DeReus of Ankeny, IA, six great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren; beloved step-children Rex and Becky Picken of Grain Valley, MO, their children and grandchildren; dear friends and dedicated helpers Linda Cohrt and Ryan Colter of Oskaloosa; special neighbors, the Jacob and Brittany DeCook family of Ottumwa, IA.

Besides her parents and husbands, Frances was preceded in death by a beloved daughter, Julie Ann DeReus, brothers John and George Vermillion, sister-in-law Joyce Andrews, and lifelong friend Margaret White.

Private family graveside services will be conducted at a later date. Memorials may be made to Mahaska Health Hospice Serenity House or The Golden Goose Club.

Cemetery Details

Forest Cemetery

934 North 9th ST
Oskaloosa, IA 52577
secretary@forestcemetery.com
<http://www.forestcemetery.org/>

Tribute Wall

MM

“ Francis was a dear neighbor of my family while growing up. I'll never forget the many hand me downs we received from Francis' girls. There was a beautiful green “fancy” dress that I got to wear at church for when I joined the church. Our Mom, Louretta Redding stayed close to Francis through the many years. So sorry for your loss!

Marcia Redding McAlpin - October 05, 2024 at 01:24 PM

BA

“ Always enjoyed visiting with Frances PEO functions. A dear lady.

Becke Arnold - September 17, 2024 at 12:22 PM

JK

“ Sue & Judy and grandchildren: I had many good visits and we talked about Family from Frances early years. She was remarkable - May she rest in Peace

judy kielkopf - September 16, 2024 at 04:38 PM

JE

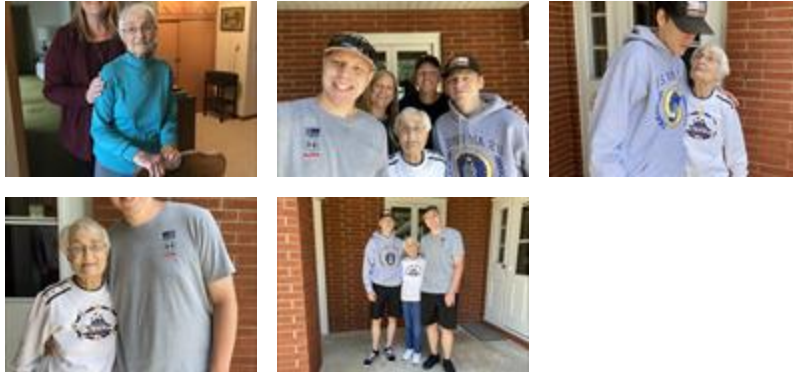
“ Julie Van Englehoven lit a candle in memory of Frances LaRue Wells-Picken



Julie Van Englehoven - September 16, 2024 at 02:00 PM

SC

“ *Grandma Frances, our hearts are breaking, but we know you are in peace and able to be with my mom and grandpa Don. Your quick wit, funny stories, and big heart will always be treasured. Every time we see a frog or watch the birds, we know you are close. Rest and peace, Grandma Frances*



Sheri Curtin - September 15, 2024 at 03:41 PM

SB

“ *Mrs. Wells was my Favorite Teacher in Jr. High. RIP*

Sherry Brunt - September 14, 2024 at 01:35 PM

LF

“ *Frances was my supervising teacher when I student taught...she was wonderful. She always had a hug for me whenever I saw her. What a special lady she was.*

Linda Fox - September 14, 2024 at 10:13 AM

JB

“ Sorry to hear of Frances’ passing. She was a teacher of mine in Junior High, and a wonderful friend of my aunt Helen Phillips. I was blessed to get to join my aunt, and Frances and some of the their other teacher friends, on a few occasions for trips to Des Moines for a play and dinner. I felt very grown up in their company, as Frances was always so kind. She lived a life well lived.

Jean Binns - September 14, 2024 at 09:40 AM