

RECORD 9-21-2017



## ELLEN LEMKE

May 18, 1915 - Sept. 11, 2017

Funeral Celebration of Life Services for Ellen Lemke, age 102, of Bedford, who died Sept. 11, were held Sept. 16, at 1 p.m. at the United Christian Presbyterian Church, Bedford. Interment was at the Fairview Cemetery in Bedford. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the Taylor County Museum. Memories may be shared at [www.ritchiefuneralhome.com](http://www.ritchiefuneralhome.com). Arrangements were entrusted to the Ritchie Funeral Home of Bedford where we 'Celebrate Life'.

Ellen Lemke never met a stranger, was always willing to help a friend in need, and knew how to love people well.

Kathryn Ellen (Graham) Lemke was born May 18, 1915, in rural Jasper County, to Thomas Graham and Margaret (Crawford) Graham. She grew up with her four siblings near Montezuma, and was graduated from Montezuma High School in 1933.

On May 19, 1934, she was united in marriage to L.E. "Dutch" Lemke. They began an adventure together that would span more than a half century.

Ellen and Dutch lived in Grinnell for several years and rode out the Great Depression with him working whatever jobs were available and her making ten pies a day for The Checker Inn Café, which she and her brother Robert operated together. When World War 2 started, Ellen's brother joined the service and Dutch became a Game Warden with the Iowa State Conservation Commission. The restaurant was closed and Ellen started a new phase of her life. Over the next decade, Dutch's assigned areas for work changed several times, and the Lemkes moved to Corydon, Shenandoah, and then Thurman, Iowa. In 1955, son Henry was born, and the

family moved to Bedford. A few years later, Dutch said, "No more moving!" and they settled down permanently on a farm just south of Bedford.

After being widowed in 1987, Ellen was never one to stay at home and twiddle her thumbs. She even drove her own car until she was 100, and filled her hours and years with activities that blessed her family, friends, and community. Ellen was an active member of the United Christian Presbyterian Church, helping with the Women's Association, teaching Sunday school and vacation Bible school, singing with the choir, and being a blessing wherever else she could be there. She was a member of the Eastern Star for over 80 years, and was also involved in just about every club in the community at one point or another.

She will be remembered by many youngsters as the washer woman at the Taylor County Historical Society Museum. She volunteered at the school, participated in the yearly singing of The Messiah, and even acted in community plays. She volunteered at the local nursing home for decades, passing out lots of hugs and reading to and reminiscing with residents. Many times she talked about going to "read to the old folks" long after she was older than the majority of them. She never saw herself as elderly. Ellen shared community happenings on two different radio shows, and wrote the society column for The Bedford Times Press for many years. Over the last decade she joined the Community Singers and discovered a whole new passion. Traveling the area and singing with this group was the highlight of the last several years.

Ellen was busy planning her next creative endeavors when she passed away at her own home at the age of 102.

Left to cherish Ellen's memory are her two children, Rita Pyle of Eufaula, Oklahoma, and Henry (Janie) Lemke of Bedford, four grandchildren, four great-great grandchildren, ; and numerous nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends.

Preceding Ellen in death was her husband Dutch Lemke; and her four siblings, Margaret Figland, Bob Graham, Bill Graham, and Betty Light.

Ellen's life motto seems appropriate here:

"Laughter is heap good medicine. Take it in extra large doses." - EGL