



Ruth Ellen Carlson

April 7, 1932 - January 16, 2026

Ruth Ellen Carlson, formerly of Iron Mountain, Michigan, born April 7, 1932, within the confines of the city of Detroit, died peacefully at Mount Olivet Careview Home in Minneapolis, Minnesota on January 16, 2026. Ruth was the daughter of the late Elizabeth Charlton, née Ellis, and the late Hezzie Charlton. Ruth had one older brother, Tom Charlton, and spent time with cousins and grandparents in Marmora, Ontario, Hazel, Kentucky and the Detroit area as family members left the South. The family hunted, fished and camped together while Ruth was growing up, giving her a lifelong connection to the outdoors.

Ruth moved with her family at a young age to Millington, Michigan and lived on a small farm while her father continued to work in the city. It was the Great Depression, and they were able to provide for themselves by growing their own food and raising animals. Elizabeth was a wonderful cook and baker and cooked for the farmhands at neighboring farms.

Ruth attended a one-room schoolhouse for her elementary years and graduated from Millington High School in 1950. She was on the award-winning softball team, sang in the Triple Trio, was on the yearbook staff, and participated in other activities. Ruth remained connected to her high school classmates for many years, attending mixed class reunions as long as she was able. She told stories about playing softball in curlers as the tournament

was the same day as Prom. Ruth always had a love of music and traded babysitting for piano lessons in high school. She was committed to musical education and supported both of her daughters in pursuing competence with different instruments. Ruth also became a member of the United Methodist Church at the age of 18 and was an active church member wherever she lived.

Ruth attended nursing school at Highland Park General Hospital Nursing School from 1950-1953. She graduated as the president of her class and formed lifelong friendships with her classmates. As a nurse, Ruth worked for a psychiatrist and a dermatologist. After her youngest daughter entered high school, Ruth returned to nursing and worked for the City Department of Public Health in Iron Mountain as a visiting nurse and then at ManorCare Nursing Home.

Ruth married Don Bird in 1954 and the two set off for Gary, Indiana. Due to Don's career, the couple, and later the young family moved from Gary back to the Detroit area, where their eldest daughter was born, then to Cincinnati, Ohio, followed by Houston, Texas, where their younger daughter was born, back to Cincinnati and then to Freehold, New Jersey, before moving to Iron Mountain, Michigan in 1972 after Don's parents died.

Ruth settled quickly into life in Iron Mountain, enjoying a return to a smaller town with the benefits of outdoor activities. She swam, skied, snowmobiled, took up cribbage and was very active at Trinity United Methodist Church, singing in the choir and serving on various boards. Ruth and Don divorced in 1974 and Ruth, always an avid reader, opened The Village Book Shop in downtown Iron Mountain. She also started a Parents Without Partners support group at Trinity with the help of Rev. David Liscomb and met her beloved second husband Fritz Carlson in that group. Ruth closed the bookstore after about two years. She married Fritz in 1977. Together the two of them

remained active at Trinity, played cribbage every morning, supported their blended family and enjoyed time at their camp on the Sturgeon River and wintering in Gulf Shores, Alabama until travel became too challenging. Fritz died in 2013 and Ruth remained in Iron Mountain supported by family until 2021, when she moved to Minneapolis to be closer to her younger daughter. She moved onto the independent floor of Mount Olivet in November 2021 and became known for participating in every activity offered, launching a recycling program, attending church twice per week and telling her many stories.

Ruth instilled a love of education and purpose in her family and exhibited a strong sense of faith and a belief in the goodness of others to all who met her. She was unfailingly faithful and supportive and centered in accountability. She believed the best of people and accepted them, no questions asked. She supported her community through volunteering with the Friend of the Court, providing medical respite care and spending countless hours serving the congregation of Trinity UMC. She was a great cook and welcomed friends and family at all hours.

Ruth now joins her beloved husband of 36 years, Fritz Carlson. She was preceded in death by her brother Tom Charlton and great-grandson Wyatt Carlson. Ruth loved her family above all else, in particular her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Ruth is survived by her daughters: Patty Bird Ferguson (Bill), Kara Bird Sankaran (Sri); her sons: Derrick Carlson (Tee), Randy Carlson and Paul Carlson; her grandchildren: Elissa Ferguson, Jessica Ferguson, Erin Ferguson, Maddie Sankaran Witten (Zack), Austin Sankaran, Bryan Carlson (Kayla), Bret Carlson, Brent Carlson and Blaine Carlson; her great-grandchildren: Charlotte Sankaran Witten, Lyra Sankaran Witten, Micah Carlson, Noah Carlson and Harrison Carlson; her daughter-in-law Jane

Carlson; her nieces and nephews: Ann Weinzierl, Beth Piercy, Tom Charlton (Jill), Carol Meeuwenberg (Mark), Mark Charlton and Denise Khreis (Jamal).

Visitation will be at the Trinity United Methodist Church, 808 Carpenter Ave., from 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM on April 11, 2026, with Rev. Crystal Thomas officiating the memorial service at 10:30 AM.

In lieu of sending flowers, please consider donations to the Trinity United Methodist Church in Iron Mountain or Mt. Olivet Home/Careview in Minneapolis.

Condolences may be expressed to the family of Ruth Ellen Carlson online at www.ernashfuneralhomes.com.

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Iron Mountain Cemetery Park

Cedar Ave
Iron Mountain, MI 49801
(906) 774-1212

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 11. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (CT)

Trinity United Methodist Church
808 Carpenter Ave.
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

Memorial Service

APR 11. 10:30 AM (CT)

Trinity United Methodist Church
808 Carpenter Ave.
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

Tribute Wall



“ We send our prayers and condolences to all of Ruth's family and friends. I had the privilege of knowing her. She was truly a very special person 🙏

Larry and Carol Trevillian - January 21 at 10:02 AM