



## Donna M. Sears

February 10, 1927 - February 8, 2021

Donna Marie Ingersoll Johnson Sears arrived in this world February 10, 1927 in her grandma's bed on the family farm north of Lake City, Mich. in the middle of a snowstorm. She was the only child of Jack and Lita (nee Lamb) Ingersoll. Her spirit lifted peacefully on February 8, 2021 with both of her children by her side, two days shy of her 94th birthday.

Donna's childhood was happy as an only child. Her father taught in one room schoolhouses and lumber camps, so there were frequent moves from small town to small town. She graduated from Lake City High School, and went on to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Art at Central Michigan University. She later went back, along with her father, both earning their teaching certificates and graduating together.

Donna began teaching kindergarten in Williamston, Mich. in the late 1940s, where she met and married Charles Edward Johnson. She continued to teach until her first child was born. She stayed home to raise her children, Lee Ann, Scott, and Brad, returning to work in the Williamston Middle School when Brad started kindergarten. She spent the rest of her working career inspiring children in their love of reading, from working as a librarian to teaching 6th grade. She made the written word come alive. While at home, Donna wrote a weekly newspaper column, "The Little Woman," filled with stories about raising her children and life in the 50's and 60's.

Donna was widowed at 54, and continued to teach in the Middle School until she retired. She then began her next adventure, marrying long-time family friend Al Sears, and relocating to Mesa, Ariz. Together they designed their new home, built overlooking the Arizona desert with Phoenix lights in the distance and the Superstition Mountains hugging them. The home included a designated clay studio, where she spent hundreds of happy hours sculpting. She loved to share her creations, often trading her works with other artists, as well as selling many. Her most memorable sale was a clay piece that went to a member of the Kingston Trio. She truly came into her own, and was proud of the title of "Artist."

Donna and Al had twenty wonderful years together in the desert, traveling in their motorhome, christened "The Geezer," and boating on Lake Powell. They loved exploring the country, finding unique art and antique shops, historical buildings and Indigenous structures. Summers they would drive the Geezer to the family cottage in Lake City, Mich. to spend time with family and friends. The highlights were always "The Greatest 4th In The North," and the Lamb Family Reunion. She was proud of being the matriarch of the flock.

Following Al's death, Donna moved back to Michigan and joined her daughter, Lee, in Kalkaska. Her creativity took flight in a rekindled direction, again writing a column, "The Little Old Woman" for the local paper. Her humorous musings on the challenges of aging connected her with people from around the area and across the nation. She developed valued relationships with many who wrote to her, being touched by one or more of her columns. These friendships were a source of joy during a time when actual travel was becoming a challenge, and all her correspondence happily filled her days.

Donna is survived by her children, Lee Ann Hill and Scott (Karen) Johnson; grandchildren Lance (Chelsea Lynn) Hill, Chelsea Marie Hill, and Kate

(Nathan) Johnson Lozon; and great-grandchildren Leland Hill and Eleanor Lozon, with another Lozon expected in June. She is also survived by step-children Mari Jean (Gordy) Ellis, Shannon (Len) Hammond, Patti (Dave) Ulrich and Rick (Colleen) Sears; step-grandchildren in Arizona and Michigan, Michelle Sehl and great-grandson Jack Sehl, Troy Hill and great-granddaughter Lexia (Chandler) Shazri in Michigan.

Donna was preceded in death by her husbands Chuck Johnson and Al Sears; and son Brad (BJ) Johnson.

If you would like to express sympathy through a gift, instead of flowers, Donna would be tickled if you made a contribution to the Kalkaska Friends of the Library Building Fund in her honor.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Kalkaska Funeral and Cremation Services. No service is planned per Donna's wishes.

The family would like hearing your thoughts, memories and stories about Donna. They can be shared at <https://www.kalkaskafuneralhome.com/obituaries/Donna-Sears-3/>

# Tribute Wall

CG

“ *Little Woman Donna was a treasure! I read her column as soon as I received my Antrim County News in the mail. I sent an email to her a little over a year ago to thank her for her writing, her wit, and her cheerfulness, and she wrote back immediately! What a treat it was to correspond with her, and to read her wonderful remembrances and insightful thoughts on today's affairs in our communities and our country. My prayers and thoughts are with you, her family, as you lay her to rest and remember her with love. Carolyn A. H. Graves*

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**Carolyn G** - March 09, 2021 at 04:44 PM

ST

“ *We have always read Donna's column in The Antrim Review. Several years ago she wrote about her father teaching in Jennings MI two-room schoolhouse. My grandparents lived there and my Mother and Uncle went to school there. I emailed Donna and she responded immediately. Yes, indeed, her father taught my Mother, Carol Nyberg, and Donna remembered her! My sister, three aunts, one uncle and one cousin and I visited her at her daughter's home in Kalkaska and had a delightful visit with Donna. We brought lots of pictures to show her of Jennings. She had a perfect memory, very sharp, very bright, and very entertaining! And she remembered my Grandfather, Alfred Nyberg, giving her accordion lessons when she was a child! What a great afternoon that was. God rest her soul.....Condolences to her family...*

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**susan talmadge** - February 25, 2021 at 11:53 AM

SK

“ I always looked forward to reading Donna's column in the Antrim Review. So many times she made me laugh out loud. Her sense of humor and wonderful outlook on life was inspiring. She will be missed.

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**Sherry Kremer** - February 24, 2021 at 01:32 PM

JW

“ I'm was so sad to open my copy of The Kalkaska Review to read the final column by the Little Old Woman. She could make me laugh out loud. I never met her, but we did email! I'll miss you.

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**Judy W** - February 22, 2021 at 07:36 PM

CN

“ My friendship with Donna started in the late 70's when we taught at Williamston Middle School. My best memory was when I walked into the library and it was filled with students listening to Donna read a story. She was amazing.

Now I am lucky to live in Lake City where Donna grew up. We were able to continue our friendship all these years. We have shared many good times. My husband and I were at the Greatest 4th in the North parade where Donna was the Grand Marshall. That was a treat.

When our boys were young and on vacation at our cabin, we use to walk down from the laundry mat to Donna's to enjoy her warm yummy sugar cookies and to catch up. Donna and I have enjoyed fireworks, shared sewing projects, shared Lake City ghost stories, shared our families stories and so much more.

We have a couple of Donna's art pieces that I will always cherish. I wasn't able to visit Donna in the last year because of co-vid but she continued to send her newspaper articles and we continued to share our quilting and lives with each other. I will always think of Donna and remember all the good times we shared and know that I was blessed with our friendship. Cheri Northrop-Ryan

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**Cheri Northrop-Ryan** - February 20, 2021 at 07:50 PM



“ My heart has completely split into two. What a huge loss to this world! I don't even know where I would begin about how huge of an impact she has had on my life!! I remember there were a couple of us students who seemed to be pretty "tight" with both her and Mrs Helder. I do remember, on a few occasions, both teachers taking a few of us out to see movies. One was *Pretty in Pink* and the other was *The Neverending Story*. I felt truly pretty special to be able to do that with teachers! A few years ago during some email conversations, she reminded me how I used to call her after school if it was storming. I laughed at that. I completely had forgotten! I was a latch-key kid (an only child) and TERRIFIED of storms. And here was this amazing and caring teacher that permitted me to call her at home when I needed her most. <3 One summer, as well, I met her in Lake City. My dad owned a business up there and we were ALWAYS up there for the Greatest 4th in the North! This had to be 84? I recall seeing a great doll collection in her mother's home (I think it was there?)....I was awed! But even as an adult, she was still there for me. In another email correspondence, we were talking about my kids and the issues we were having with our district. I explained we were considering enrolling them in an online charter academy. She certainly didn't seem to be in agreement with that idea for many reasons LOL..... but, we enrolled them, anyway.....and, it turned out to be a nightmare experience in numerous ways. I should've listened to Mrs Johnson. I am going to severely miss her so much, but I am also very, very blessed to have known her and to have had her be such a positive role model in my life. How does that saying go? "When I count my blessings, I count you twice?". My thoughts and prayers are with EVERYONE who loves her as if she were our mother, as well. <3

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**Carrie Sparks (Gunn)** - February 19, 2021 at 01:54 AM

KL

“ I’ll always have special memories of “Mrs. Johnson” as my 6th grade social studies teacher. My class was her last before she retired. I’ve thought about her through the years as such a wonderful role model and amazing teacher! My condolences to her family and friends.

*Kristen Howell Lenkowski*

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**Kristen Lenkowski** - February 16, 2021 at 07:14 PM

CI

“ I met Donna while working at the Kaskaska Commission on Aging. She was a wonderfully sweet lady and enjoyed many talks with her. My condolences to the family.

*Cindy Ingalls*

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**Cindy Ingalls** - February 14, 2021 at 01:04 AM

JB

“Of the thousands of memories I have of Donnamom — her nickname, between she and me — I thought it might interest some to know if her theater and writing experience in the late 1950s and early 1960s. She shared much of it with me for a graduate school research paper on Michigan Theatre History. There are a lot of details, but the short version is that she started a community theater group in Williamston with many of her friends. She wrote plays every year, highlighting local events and poking fun at local characters that impacted the lives of the citizens of Williamston. Her quick wit and clever wordplay made her plays a hit, as did the participation of local dignitaries and even her shy husband, Chuck. How I wish I could have seen her in her hay day. The scripts are mostly lost, unfortunately, though a few snippets remained in the scrapbooks she shared with me. In addition to her Little Lady column and playwriting at the time, she also wrote some things on spec for a new comedy artist at the time that the country would come to know as Ruth Buzzi.

*Donnamom was a beacon for me. She was one of the first to recognize the artistic yearnings within me, to honor and encourage them, and to make me feel somehow that there was a place for me in this world, at a time when I was lost and lonely and afraid. We corresponded often over the years, and her depth of compassion and wonder and excitement was always an inspiration. In everyone's life, I guess, there are people that touch us, that change us, that make us different than we were before they came into our lives. Donnamom was a shimmering gem to everyone she met.*

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**Jeff Brown** - February 13, 2021 at 10:41 PM

NA

“ Dear Donna, your witty column was the first I read in *The Review*, and the only one I saved and shared with friends. I miss you already. Thank you for inspiring your readers to laugh a little more and know the world is a better place when treasures such as yourself grace us.

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**Nancy** - February 13, 2021 at 09:12 PM

SF

“ I had Mrs. Johnson in middle school for English and will always remember her reading to the class *Where the Sidewalk Ends* by Shel Silverstein. She was one of the most loving and nurturing teacher we were blessed to have. Because of her I found my passion in reading. Heaven gained another Angel.

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**Shannon Disbrow Fleser** - February 12, 2021 at 10:51 PM

BH

“ Donna was the best of the best as she taught. She loved the children in her charge and shared her unforgettable passion for reading with them. She was gentle and kind with some of the most difficult children going through the difficult passages of growing up during their middle school years. She was so creative and loving. Her legacy lies through the people she taught all those years in Williamston and beyond. Truly and unforgettable woman with an a glorious smile. She was loved by all who met her. Peace be with her family.

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**Bob Howe** - February 11, 2021 at 10:58 PM

CS

YES! Absolutely nailed it!! --Carrie

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**Carrie Sparks** - February 19, 2021 at 02:03 AM

KE

“ Donna loved to read to her 6th graders. Her favorite book was "One Dog Man" by Ahmad Kamal. Took me quite a few years to find a copy. In 2013 I found a copy on Amazon. It's on my bookshelf. Thinking about letting my soon to be 13 grandson Rowan borrow it for a while.

Keith Eldred - February 11, 2021 at 10:23 PM

SD

“ A warm,talented loving lady. Blessed to be part of her family. Fascinating to visit with she knew so much and shared so many wonderful stories. Very much like her beloved mother Lita. Rest in peace. Will miss you.

Sally Deford - February 10, 2021 at 12:11 PM

JZ

“ We are sorry to hear of Danna's passing. We always enjoy visiting with her at the family reunion. Such a talented and creative lady. Prayers for your family.

Jamie Zeilinger - February 10, 2021 at 11:20 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Donna M. Sears.



February 09, 2021 at 11:37 AM

MP

“ *Such a beautiful person. So warm and inviting. I loved her the moment I met her. Lee invited me over and I had the pleasure of meeting Mom. She had wonderful memories of all sorts of things and I would stare and listen intently. We'd watch the turkeys out the front window and then the deer would show up. She loved watching Jeopardy, The Amazing Race & Survivor, especially if there was a "hunk" playing. I would read her columns every time she put one out. I learned a lot about her & the family from her sometimes amusing accounts. She was smart as a whip. I will miss her dearly. Rest in Paradise sweet lady.*

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**Marianne Rose Price** - February 09, 2021 at 11:33 AM

BB

*She was a second mom to our son, Jeff who adored her. We are so grateful that she was in his life and ours as we never met a more caring and loving person who reached out to so many.*

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**betty and duane brown** - February 13, 2021 at 10:55 PM

ME

“ *Rest peacefully dear lady. Thank you for sharing your life with us.*



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**Melanie** - February 09, 2021 at 08:05 AM