



## Mildred Larson

July 18, 2008

Mildred E. Larson, 95, passed away on July 18, 2008, at Good Samaritan Fort Collins Village. Mildred Ethel Wandersee was born on Sept. 5, 1912, in Waverly, Minn., a small farming community forty miles west of Minneapolis. As the only child of Frank and Dora Krause Wandersee, she grew up on their small diversified farm which was near Waverly. When she was small, she had a close affinity with the geese that her mother raised. One goose, in particular, was almost like a pet to her. When Mildred was about eight years old, she began taking piano lessons from a woman in Waverly. Once a week, for years, she would stay after school for her piano lesson before walking home along the railroad track. About 1926, when Mildred would have been fourteen years old, she and her parents went to the county fair where they each bought raffle tickets for a new Essex automobile. Later that evening when one of her uncles and his wife drove out to the farm, she was amazed to find out that she had won it. Since Mildred was still too young to drive, her parents sold the car they had been driving and used the new one. After completing high school, Mildred studied piano for three years at the Macphail School of Music in Minneapolis from which she graduated in the early 1930's. After learning that there was a need for a good piano teacher in the small towns around Roseau, Minn., she moved there and taught piano for five or six years. As it happened, she met a young teacher named Milton E. Larson who taught school in a one-room schoolhouse outside the nearby town of Warroad. He wanted to learn to play the piano so that he would be a better teacher. Eventually, they were

married on Aug. 27, 1939. About a year later, Milton found employment as a school principal in a suburb of Minneapolis; so, they moved to Robbinsdale where they built their first house. Unfortunately, this was just before Pearl Harbor was attacked; therefore, soon they found themselves living in Champaign, Ill., while Milton taught at Rantoul Air Force Base. By 1943, they were living in newly-constructed shipyard worker housing in Port Orchard, Washington while Milton worked as a machinist at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. About a year after World War II ended, Milton and Mildred were again living in Minneapolis and that is where their only child, Robert Allen Larson, was born on Dec. 21, 1946. While Mildred was in the hospital for the birth, she could hear the Salvation Army Band playing Christmas carols on the street below. Once the nurse brought Robert to Mildred wrapped in a red bow since it was shortly before Christmas. Mildred, Milton, and Robert continued to live in Robbinsdale, Minnesota until 1957, after which they lived in Flint, Mich., for five years and St. Petersburg, Fla., for two years so that Milton could advance in his teaching career. In 1964, Robert went off to college in Chicago while Milton and Mildred moved to East Brunswick, N.J. Then, in 1966, Milton became a professor at Colorado State University; so, they moved to Fort Collins. Throughout Milton's forty-year career in education, Mildred provided invaluable support that helped him to achieve his goals. For example, as a skilled typist, she spent many hours typing his doctoral dissertation while still doing all of the tasks required of a homemaker. While Milton pursued his career, Mildred "kept the home fires burning" with steadfast love. During the years Robert was growing up, and beyond, Mildred was always a source of understanding, love, and common sense, as well as a very effective sounding board. Even though her attempts to teach Robert to play the piano were ultimately largely unsuccessful because he didn't want to practice and she didn't want to force him to, she did instill in him a lifelong love of music. For more than forty years, Mildred was a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Fort Collins. After Milton died in 1987, she continued to live in their house until she was more than ninety-two years old even though severe macular

degeneration of the retina caused her to be legally blind throughout those years. Help from neighbors and some members of her church allowed her to continue living by herself before she had to move to Good Samaritan Fort Collins Village in 2004. Mildred particularly liked music, flowers, birds, and travel. Over the years, she and Milton visited most parts of the United States, as well as parts of Europe and China. Mildred is survived by her son, Robert A. Larson, of Portland, Ore.; and Robert's longtime companion and Mildred's good friend, Nancy Webster. In addition, she is survived by her cousin, Joyce Wandersee of Fort Collins. She also leaves several other cousins, nieces, and nephews who live in other states. A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. today at St. John's Lutheran Church, 305 E. Elizabeth St. in Fort Collins, followed by interment at Grandview Cemetery. A reception at the church will follow interment. Memorial contributions may be made to the Larimer County Humane Society in care of Bohlender Funeral Chapel, 121 W. Olive, Fort Collins, CO 80524. Friends may send condolences to the family at [bohlenderfuneralchapel.com](http://bohlenderfuneralchapel.com).