



## Ella Marie Spanjers

October 20, 1926 - June 11, 2024

Ella M. Spanjers

was born 10-20-26 in Duluth, MN to Anton & Anna Spanjers. She had 2 older brothers, Robert & Leo, & at age 2 the family moved to south Mpls. where her sister Lois was born. The family moved to north Mpls. where she attended St. Bridget Catholic grade school & then St. Anthony of Padua Catholic high school. The family's favorite home growing up was on the Mississippi river (approximately 85th & West River Road N). They swam in the river, ice skated on the rink their Dad made in the yard & grew fruits & vegetables that they sold from a yard stand to those traveling to/from Anoka. Ella's teachers all thought she would grow up to be a concert pianist because she was so talented. She often had to give up her recess & weekends to accompany other musicians including working at Mc Phail.

However, Ella found her passion in the lab graduating from the U of MN in Medical Technology in 1948. She worked her entire career for the U of MN starting in the hematology lab but by 1954 she had moved across the hall to special hematology, became a senior technologist by 1967 & lab manager in 1969. After 50 years at the U she "retired" but continued as a volunteer working 5 more years. She revised procedure manuals & developed new methodologies to stain bone marrow sections. Because her knowledge of bone marrow processing & cytochemical staining was so widely recognized, Ella was frequently consulted by technologists & pathologists throughout the US. She co-authored a chapter in a hematology textbook.

Ella lived her entire adult life within a mile of the U of MN until her last year when she moved to Eagle Crest assisted living where she could receive meals. She was extremely independent until her last 3 days of life when she suffered a severe stroke and did not regain consciousness.

Ella was a true Gopher fan, initially attending all Gopher athletic events in the 40's & 50's & then, when you had to have specific tickets to individual sports, she had season tickets to basketball, football & hockey into the 2020's. She was very athletic herself participating in downhill skiing, cross country skiing, water skiing, swimming almost daily, ice skating, hiking (especially out west with Glacier being a favorite spot), playing hockey & many other sports. Ella bowled on a league until age 95, golfed (her favorite) until 94 & drove her beloved red car until age 96.

Ella & a group of 8-10 special med tech friends or family members traveled the world. Rome & walking on the great wall of China were 2 highlights. A core group of friends & fellow travelers were Mary W, Irene B & Ruth C. Ella was far & above the favorite aunt to her 12 nieces & nephews. She was also a favorite among her 54 cousins (on 1 side of her family). She was a devote Catholic going to the Vatican multiple times & attending daily mass at St. Olaf, Mpls.

Ella is preceded in death by her parents Anton & Anna Spanjers, her siblings Robert, Leo, Lois (Myers), 2 nephews Doug & Bob Spanjers & great niece Rachel Serber Duncan. She is survived by 10 nieces & nephews, Randy, Barb, Steve, Julie, Jay, Scott, Todd, Mark, Paul & Claudia, 25 great nieces & nephews & 28 great-great nieces & nephews, & 6 1st cousins & multiple generations of cousins. She also leaves behind many good friends from all walks of life. Memorials to St Olaf Catholic Church, Mpls. or to U of MN athletics. Memorial Mass to be held Saturday, August 10th at 10AM with visitation one hour prior at, St. Olaf Catholic Church, 215 S 8th St, Minneapolis, luncheon immediately after service with a procession to Gethsemane Cemetery to follow. Service will be livestreamed at [www.youtube.com/user/SaintOlafChurch/live](http://www.youtube.com/user/SaintOlafChurch/live)



# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG **10**. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Olaf Catholic Church  
215 South 8th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

## Mass of Christian Burial

AUG **10**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Olaf Catholic Church  
215 South 8th Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

# Tribute Wall



“ Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels created a Memorial Mass of Ella Spanjers in memory of Ella Marie Spanjers



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Washburn-McReavy - June 25, 2024 at 10:30 AM

LT

“ For many years, my mother, Velta Svinis, worked with Ella at UofM Special Hematology. Mother spoke very highly of Ella a true and loyal friend who also shared her work knowledge without hesitation. Although mother passed in 2021, and even though she had moved to the West Coast when she retired, she always spoke lovingly of her friend Ella, and always included her in her prayers.

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Lisa Turnpaugh - September 17, 2024 at 09:18 PM

SC

“ Susan C. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ella Marie Spanjers.

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Susan C. - August 09, 2024 at 11:21 AM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Ella Marie Spanjers.*



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August 08, 2024 at 12:18 PM



“ *Barb, Larry, Daniel, & Liam planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ella Marie Spanjers.*

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**Barb, Larry, Daniel, & Liam** - August 08, 2024 at 12:18 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Ella Marie Spanjers.*



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August 07, 2024 at 09:55 AM

MY

“ I was privileged to have met Ella through my work as a teaching specialist at the U of M medical technology program. Ella provided me with cases, specimens and lab tests to help teach my students. When she retired from her position as supervisor of Special Hematology, she continued to help the program with her depth of knowledge of blood cell morphology by teaching our students with a double scope. There wasn't a cell Ella could not identify. She had worked closely with Dr. Brunning who is a big name in the field of hematology. Ella imparted all the knowledge she learned from others and her work experiences to her employees, colleagues and our students. Outside of her profession as a hematologist, Ella was loved by her family and friends. She showed the love of Jesus to all those around her.

She will be greatly missed but left a legacy of joy and kindness as an example for us to follow. Well done, good and faithful servant. Enjoy your reward in heaven.

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**Mary Jane Yue** - August 06, 2024 at 06:28 PM

DM

“ For many years, Ella was a fixture in the Medical Technology Program (now Medical Laboratory Sciences) student laboratory. She would spend hours "double-scoping" with students to make sure they could recognize the characteristics of blood and bone marrow cells. She will be missed by the Medical Laboratory Sciences Program, but her legacy will live on in all of our program graduates that she helped enter into our profession.



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**Donna J. Spannaus-Martin, PhD, MLS** - August 05, 2024 at 03:07 PM

CW

“ Ella will be missed. I sat next to Ella, Mary W. & Ruth C. at the Gopher Hockey games and I loved sitting with them. Ella was a very big Gophers supporter! I miss them all and it was a real experience sitting with gals that were as old as my mother!! RIP Ella, I won't soon forget you. - Carol White

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**Carol White** - July 11, 2024 at 10:21 AM