



Ellen Joan Wess

July 4, 1939 - March 10, 2026

Ellen Joan Welch Wess ObituaryEden Prairie, MN - Ellen Joan Welch Wess, of Eden Prairie, passed away March 10, 2026 after a long limbo in Alzheimer's. Born on the Fourth of July (she would say "the whole country is celebrating me!") in Columbus, OH, she was the only child of John F. Welch and Mildred Grosvenor Welch, who raised her in Fort Wayne and nearby Decatur, IN.

She was graduated from Christian College, (1959) and University of Missouri, (1961) both in Columbus, MO. It was in college that she started earning the first of many journalism awards she'd go on to receive. It was in a journalism class at Mizzou that she was seated alphabetically in front of Nathaniel Wess. Married in her parents' Fort Wayne living room in 1962, they were only apart for two brief periods until he moved to care facilities in 2020 and his subsequent death in 2021.

Ellen spent most of her adult life in southern California, where she and Nat had two children, Deborah Wess and David Wess, who survive her, as do their spouses Todd Stern and Tracy Wess, and their children, Henry and Olivia Stern, and Matthew and Elizabeth Wess.

In the late '80's Nat's new job brought them to MN for the 1st time, where they settled in Savage and Nat brought Canterbury Downs to life. Subsequent

career pivots of Nat's brought them briefly back to SoCal, and then to the Bay Area, and when it was time to retire, they chose to return to Minnesota, a decision that led many of their friends in both places to scratch their heads! Ellen would reply many times that "I've always been a midwestern girl at heart; I never liked CA!"

Wherever she lived, her life had some constants: reading 3 or 4 newspapers a day, reading thousands of books both on her own and for various book groups, especially that of the Association of University Women, and playing innumerable hands of bridge. Ellen was a bridge champion many times over, and took it very seriously, subscribing to many professional bridge journals, studying bridge master books, and loving it always, whether playing competitively or just of an evening with another couple. In CA the first time, she was very involved with the Junior Women's Club and won awards for her club's domination of press releases highlighting the activities of the organization and its members.

Back in CA in the early 90's, she added Newcomer's Club to her list of primary activities, and enjoyed making many new friends through its book club and bridge tournaments also. Upon her final landing in MN, this time in Eden Prairie, she found her "Dream Home" and took great pleasure in planning its décor and overseeing frequent updates. New friends were made again through Newcomers, and of course, bridge! She and Nat traveled the world, and remarked that those retirement years were the best of their lives. Whether cruising the coast of Alaska or the fjords of Norway, steam-boating down the Mississippi, or crisscrossing the lower 48 multiple times over, she enjoyed every historical site. An aficionado of fine hotels, she spent many Christmases at various Ritz Carltons, and wintered yearly at a favorite resort in Tucson.

Dementia softened her. She literally had to give up control as she needed more and more assistance, which is not easy for anyone but especially given

her baseline. At Flagstone she was beloved by many of her caregivers and the staff on the various floors she lived, and since last spring, the hospice nurses, who became her last friends. Before there was no there there, caregivers reported that she would occasionally smile and could even still joke: "How are you doing, Ellen?" "Not great!", she would croak. Her family is extremely grateful to Salma, the Amandas, and all who cared for her in her final years.

Ellen lives on in the memories of her loved ones, and countless friends across the country, most of whom she was close to for multiple decades, even going back to her high school days, and first years in CA.

Funeral services were private. Although more of a book buyer than a borrower, she was a life-long supporter of libraries and said that "librarian" would have been her second career choice. Donations in Ellen's name may be made to Hennepin County Libraries at <https://www.supportthclib.org/> or to an AAUW branch of your choice.

Tribute Wall



“ Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels created a Memorial Service for Ellen Joan Wess in memory of Ellen Joan Wess



Washburn-McReavy - March 12 at 09:13 AM