

## Falls City, NE

Marie Diane (Fritz) Parsons passed away Sunday, Nov. 26, at the Fred & Pamela Buffett Cancer Center in Omaha. She was 77 years old.

Marie was born Feb. 17, 1946, the fifth of eight children of Edward Otto Fritz and Esther Marie (Biermann) Fritz. She spent an idyllic childhood at the family- farm just north of Verdon, Nebraska, where she learned to bake and do chores around the house and the farm. From an early age, Marie was an avid reader who could often be found in the “girls’ room,” curled up with a book in her hands.

“I will definitely miss talking about which book we were each reading, and trading books back and forth,” her daughter Catherine (Katie) Layton of Lincoln remembered. “I also always tell people to never watch ‘Jeopardy’ with Mom and think you can actually get an answer correct before her. She was a wealth of information.”

Her mother- unexpected death in late 1961 forced Marie and her sister Martha to take on more family duties around the farmhouse. They helped their father raise their younger siblings — Lyle, Philip and Pamela — until Martha married and Marie graduated from Dawson-Verdon High School in 1964. She left for Lincoln that fall to attend the University of Nebraska.

Marie attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, majoring in Elementary Education. For a time she lived with her oldest sister, Elaine Browne, and her family in Lincoln. Marie graduated from UNL in 1968.

Marie- first job was teaching sixth graders in Racine, Wisconsin for the 1968-69 school year. By the end of that year, Marie- sister, Pam, remembers riding in Marie- Rambler back to Richardson County from Racine. Marie drove herself and Pam, with all Marie- earthly possessions — albums, books and other items — piled neatly in the car. Draped across the pile of albums was a wedding dress. Marie was engaged to marry Neal E. Parsons, a sergeant in the United States Army.

Marie married Neal on July 5, 1969 at St. Paul- Evangelical Lutheran Church, six miles north of Falls City. Her wedding party received as a gift a charm bracelet with one charm on it. The charm read: “Neal and Marie 1969.”

The couple moved to Killeen, deep in the heart of Texas and next to Fort Hood (now Fort Cavazos), where Neal was stationed.

Within a year, the couple relocated to the Lincoln Air Park, where Marie taught for three years while Neal attended law school at the University of Nebraska. The Parsons left Lincoln in 1973, Neal with his J.D. and Marie with a master- degree in education.

They welcomed the first of their four children to the family in August 1973 when Brent Parsons was born. Soon after, the young family moved to their home on Lane Street.

Five years later, as Marie was expecting her and Neal- second child, Marie took Brent to a scheduled doctor- appointment to discuss the coming baby, including the baby- name. Brent favored a character from his favorite television show, “Happy Days.”

“I wanted to call him ‘Fonzie,’” Brent remembered.

Brent didn’t get his wish, but he did get a brother, Nathan, who was followed in relatively quick succession by sisters Catherine (“Katie”) and Rebecca (“Becky”).

The family- basement quickly became a play spot for all the Parsons children.

“She supported my love of jigsaw puzzles by giving up her space on the basement bar to serve as a full-time puzzle area,” Brent remembered.

Marie taught for 37 years in the Falls City Public Schools before retiring. She added another semester to that tenure when the district asked her back to fill an unexpected vacancy. She taught mainly at the Middle School — science, social studies and English.

She once took a trip with other teachers across Nebraska to learn more about Nebraska history. She worked in the same building as her brother, Louis Fritz of Verdon, and her sister-in-law Noala Fritz of Verdon before Noala moved to Falls City High School.

“I know Marie loved to teach and wanted the students to share her love for history,” Noala remembered. “My first year teaching Marie and I spent lunch together in the teachers lounge along with Cheryl Vice.”

Those meetings helped result in Noala meeting, dating and eventually marrying Marie- younger brother Lyle.

Marie was a member of:

Delta Kappa Gamma, a sorority for female educators

The P.E.O. Sisterhood, an international women- organization

The Nebraska Association of Retired School Personnel

The Friends of the Library committee, which provided food and desserts for receptions at the library.

Book Club at the library

The Dorcas Circle at St. Paul-

The Altar Guild at St. Paul-

The Calendar Girls monthly meeting group

One of Marie- favorite activities was a weekly coffee date with two of her best friends, Mary Symonds and Lorna Simon.

She and Neal loved their travel over the last few years where they would go on cruises with two of their dear friends. They also loved entertaining family and friends at their house on the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri.

She was known around town for her cookies, pies and cakes.

“All of my friends have her chocolate chip cookie recipe,” daughter Becky wrote.

But it was her peanut butter cookie recipe that helped Brent win his first 4-H purple ribbon. Later, Marie helped him with a fishing presentation.

“We’ scrambled at the last minute to finish a presentation board of fishing lures before leaving town on vacation,” Brent wrote. “Neither of us knew or cared about fishing, even a little bit.”

Son Nathan remembers Marie always putting her family first.

“When I had friends over, she always made sure they were well fed, usually with cookies,” Nathan wrote. “She also made the best birthday cakes and would decorate them, however I asked, whether it was Boba Fett, Iron Man or the K.C. Royals.”

Over the last 15 years, Marie enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren. The youngest of those, Owen William Layton, celebrated his first birthday in mid-November with Marie and Neal in Lincoln.

“I love how she loved us and her grandkids,” Katie wrote. “My mom with Owen on her lap, reading him a book, will always be one of my favorite memories.”

Marie is survived by her husband, four children and seven grandchildren. They are: husband Neal E. Parsons, an attorney in Falls City; son Brent Parsons and his wife, Jill Parsons, of Lee-Summit, Missouri, and their children, Paige and Will; son Nathan Parsons and his wife, Michelle Sodoro, of Omaha, and their children, Pearl and Violet; daughter Catherine (Katie) Layton and her husband, Travis Layton, of Lincoln, and their son, Owen; and daughter Rebecca (Becky) Schwartz, and her husband, Maj. Adam Schwartz, of El Paso, Texas, and their children, Karsyn and Barrett.

Other survivors include brothers Louis Fritz of Verdon and Philip Fritz of Verdon, and sisters Martha Owens of Elwood, and Pamela Fritz of Spencer, Louisiana, 15 nephews, 14 nieces, 18 grandnephews, and 15 grandnieces.

Marie was preceded in death by her parents, Edward and Esther Fritz; her siblings Eugene Fritz, Elaine (Fritz) Browne and Lyle Fritz; and a grandchild, Archie James Parsons.

Her funeral will be held on Friday, December 1, 2023 at 10:30 AM at St. Paul- Evangelical Lutheran Church, 6 miles north of Falls City with Reverend Kend Humphrey officiating. Interment will be in the church cemetery.

The family will receive friends on Thursday from 7-8:00 PM at Dorr and Clark Funeral Home.