

Esther Myklebust Simonson

January 19, 1916 – April 15, 2006



Esther Myklebust Simonson, a devoted teacher and beloved member of the Deaf education community, passed away on April 15, 2006, in Arden Hills, Minnesota, at the age of 90. Born January 19, 1916 in Jasper, Minnesota, she was the daughter of Samson and Alice (Gjertson) Myklebust.

Esther graduated from Jasper High School and earned her degree from Augustana College in 1937. She later pursued graduate work at several institutions, including Gallaudet University, the University of South Dakota, and South Dakota State University.

Esther began her teaching career at the Nebraska School for the Deaf in 1937, then moved to the Minnesota School for the Deaf in 1938 where she taught until 1942. That same year, she married Rev. Sterling Simonson, a Lutheran minister. Together, they served congregations in DeSmet, SD; Springfield, OR; Duluth, MN, and later Sioux Falls, SD, where they were active in East Side Lutheran Church and Heartland Ephphatha Ministries.

Esther began her teaching career at the Nebraska School for the Deaf in 1937, then moved to the Minnesota School for the Deaf in 1938, From 1964 to 1971, Esther returned to teaching at the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD), where she was a well-respected English teacher. Many SDSD alumni fondly remember her for her dedication, compassion, and firm commitment to literacy and academic excellence. She also worked in the Sioux Falls Public School System for ten years and served as a newsletter editor, contributing to communication within the Deaf community. Even in retirement, Esther remained actively involved by offering part-time interpreting services, continuing her life's mission of supporting Deaf individuals and promoting communication access.

Her service and leadership were recognized in 1979, when she was named "Most Admired Woman in Sioux Falls" by the Jaycettes.

Esther was the sister of former SDSD Superintendent Arthur Myklebust and a loving aunt to many extended family members within the Deaf community. She was preceded in death by her husband, Sterling, in 1993; her parents; two brothers, Arthur and Joseph Myklebust; and four sisters: Signe Haraldson, Bertha Larson, Martha Williams, and Louisa Myklebust.

She is survived by her four children: Alice (Robert) LaBarre of Roseville, MN; Paul (Lonnie) Simonson of Piedmont, CA; Stephen (Lin) Simonson of North Haven, CT; and Mary (Dean) Andrews Simonson of Vashon Island, WA; eight grandchildren; a brother, Helmer (Mary)

Myklebust of Sioux Falls; and many nieces, nephews, relatives, and friends. She was laid to rest at Hills of Rest Memorial Park in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Esther Simonson is warmly remembered for her wisdom, steady faith, and unwavering dedication to the students and communities she served.

