



Edith Erna Fritzl

JUL 31, 1927 - OCT 16, 2018



Scan to Visit



FUNERAL HOME, MEMORIAL PARK & CREMATORY

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
-----------------------	--------



Edith Erna Fritzl

JUL 31, 1927 - OCT 16, 2018

On October 16, 2018, our beloved Mama, Edith Erna Breiling Fritzl gently passed away at the age of 91, losing her long battle with Alzheimer's Disease. Through those long last days of her life, she was surrounded and held by her three living children (Vilja, Noel and Cosima) and one granddaughter (Wilhelmina). Everyone who met her and spent only moments in the presence of her wisdom, authenticity, her radiant smile and singularly beautiful green eyes, felt compelled to call her "Mama." Born on Sunday, July 31, 1927, in Klagenfurt, Austria, Mama always smiled when remembering that her mother told her how the church bells rang throughout the city when she was born. She was one of seven children born to a clarinetist with the opera orchestra of Klagenfurt and a gifted and beautiful mother. She was raised with the highest standards, while conditioned to live according to the provisions that the Depression and world war issued throughout her young life. While recognizing her musical gifts, her father planned for her to study the harp; however, the delay of the harp shipment from America instead prompted her to begin piano studies at the age of five. From that time on, her academic and musical work centered on becoming a classical concert pianist; and with her reverence and love of Chopin and Beethoven, her artistic mastery seemed a symbiosis of technical fortitude, her musical knowledge and intuitiveness, and a special touch. She was also an accomplished organist playing regularly at Church, as well as an accomplished cellist, later playing in the orchestra from time to time. Unfortunately, the years of her artistic dedication were interrupted by political upheaval and war. In 1941, she was evacuated from Klagenfurt and assigned to care for her younger siblings with her grandmother in the southern valley called Gailtal, a village called Labientschach. Ironically, living out her teen years as caretaker and protector to her family members in evacuation did not isolate them from the violence of war, and she witnessed bombings and destruction that plagued her through the end of her life. Although less



Obituary

Edith Erna Fritzl

JUL 31, 1927 - OCT 16, 2018

able to focus on her piano studies during that time, one positive element was her connection to the richness of her maternal grandmother's life. Grandmother Ursula owned and ran the town's Gasthaus (or inn) and was known for her intuitive abilities; they loved each other dearly. During those few years, Mama was also able to connect to painters from the artistic movement called the "Noetcher Kreiss" or Circle of Noetsch (an off-shoot from the school of painter Gustav Klimt in Vienna). Invited to spend the afternoon with the painter Franz Wiegele, she ended up instead sadly witnessing his and his family's death by the planes flying over and releasing their unused bombs as they crossed the Italian border. She consistently proved great resourcefulness, creativity, industriousness, courage and fortitude in helping her younger siblings and grandmother during those tenuous times. Throughout her life, she especially loved the companionship and friendship of her brothers. In 1948, back home in Klagenfurt, she had a dream that visitors from America were coming for dinner, only to wake up and learn that her father's cousin and husband from San Rafael, California were indeed visiting for late supper. That evening she was invited to apply for a visa to America under their sponsorship; and, as she was known to say that one could not "bite off of the beauty of Austria" necessarily to realize opportunity, she accepted the invitation, waiting eight long years for the visa to be approved. During that time, she accomplished a great deal musically, in time meeting a young composer and music teacher, Gottfried Fritzl; they married in 1954. When the visa approval finally came through two years later, they found they had only two days to pack up their lives and say their good-byes to make a train in Bremen, Germany, from where the SS Italia would embark on the Atlantic crossing to America. Edith was a "Mama" to many people. She had four children, whom she loved in the way she had longed for in her own life, wanting to protect them from all of the "evils" she knew to be. She built a home of deep warmth and love and kindness no matter what. She insisted on working towards a higher plane and maintained the highest standard for a loving spiritual life. Indeed, her great love of family, her pride, and the passion and love she realized as a mother made her a force to be reckoned with throughout her life. When she nursed her daughter Heidi through her illness until 1998, all were witness to her kind of superhuman love, will and strength; and



Obituary

Edith Erna Fritzl

JUL 31, 1927 - OCT 16, 2018

she seemed to hold on to hope even when there seemed nothing much to see or hold. Her husband, Gottfried, died two months after Heidi, and after that, sadly life was never quite the same. She was very smart and funny and loved jokes, was mischievous and sweet and loved story-telling, she laughed with childlike innocence at so many things that others may have overlooked. She was intensely curious and asked questions about everything, to a fault. Her candor cut through anything that seemed less than honest or true and she insisted on sincerity and truth. She was a masterful cook, a great music and German language teacher. Everyone who knew her loved her and gravitated to her special energy and beauty. However, many of these very same aspects helped her to compensate for weakness during the last years, actually masking the growing illness in her brain, making it often difficult to comprehend the reality of Alzheimer's. She truly seemed to have a kind of superhuman ability to function and survive, until nature put a stop to it. When she laughed, you could still often catch the special spark in her eyes. However, there was a sadness and a fear that began to overrule her spirit and it was painful to witness that conquest in the last months. Until recently, one of her favorite activities was to walk outside of the house and pick wilted fallen camellias off the ground. She appreciated whatever beauty they still had and brought them into the house for others to also see and appreciate what they still held. She wanted to honor them as they were, wilted and imperfect. This was also interesting as in times past, an old friend so often referred to her in German as "die Rose von Woerthersee" ("The Rose of Lake Werther", which is the name of a well-known Austrian song). The Woerthersee borders her hometown of Klagenfurt and lingers through a good portion of the beautiful southern part of the Austrian province of Carinthia. We are grateful that we were able to sit by her side, hold her hand through the end and help her to be as brave as she would have done for us were the tables turned. Edith is survived by her three living children, Vilja, Noel, and Cosima, her son-in-law, Ron, and seven grandchildren: Wilhelmina (Heidi), Jacob, Clara and Lukas (Noel) and Juliana, Christoph and Stefan (Cosima and Ron).



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Edith by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit



FUNERAL HOME, MEMORIAL PARK & CREMATORY