



## Frances May Defer

March 31, 1922 - March 19, 2024

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Frances May DeFer (nee Ryff), "Fran" passed away peacefully on March 19, 2024, at the Michigan Masonic Home in Alma at 101 years old. She was the daughter of Julia Palecki and John Ryff. Fran was born on March 31, 1922, on her grandparent's farm in Grand Haven and grew up in Hamtramck. Dubbed a "spitfire" and "Energizer Bunny," Fran accredited her longevity to the saying: "Never let any grass grow under your feet."

Beginning at a young age, Fran followed her activist mother around. Fran served workers coffee and donuts at the 1937 Chrysler Strike in Hamtramck. During WWII, Fran volunteered with the American Red Cross at the Michigan Central Station in Detroit, serving soldiers passing through town. She participated in gymnastics, spent summers on her grandparent's farm, and enjoyed the companionship of her older brother, Tony. As a married woman, she stayed busy - raising three children, hunting and fishing, traveling to Detroit with her husband to sell furs, decorating cakes, managing the home, serving as a member of the Order of the Eastern Star and the Fraternal Order of Eagles' Ladies Auxiliary, and secretly picking up shifts at an ice cream shop to support the family.

After her husband Clarence passed away in 1976, Fran worked at St. Joseph

Hospital in Mount Clemens. Upon retirement, Fran continued to stay busy. She traveled the country by bus, plane, and ship with a local senior group for decades. She loved arts and crafts like oil painting, crocheting, and quilting, and volunteered with the Salvation Army into her 90s. Fran enjoyed attending musicals and movies, playing cards and bingo, gambling, sight-seeing, dressing up for Halloween, and above all, babysitting and spending time with her grandchildren.

Fran is survived by her three children: Donna (William) Kaake, Patricia (Michael) Krause, and Duane (Michelle) DeFer; six grandchildren: Amy (Johan) Kuitse, Alice (Don) Helmrich, Andrew Krause, Charlene Krause, Marie (Ben King) DeFer, and Laura (Hayden) Starkey; nine great-grandchildren: Colin, Mariah, Lindsey (Bruno), Conor, Madeline, Eli, Joan, James, and Arthur; and one great-great-grandchild: Rafael. She was preceded in death by her husband, brother, grandson Michael Krause, and dear friends Dutchie, Rose, and Monieko.

A private service for immediate family members will be held. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Fran's memory to the Michigan Masonic Home <<https://michiganmasons.org/foundation/>> or the Salvation Army <https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/pontiac/>. Please share a memory with her family at [www.SullivanFuneralDirectors.com](http://www.SullivanFuneralDirectors.com)

# Cemetery Details

## **Cadillac Memorial Gardens East Cemetery**

38425 Garfield Road  
Clinton Township, MI 48038