

On Tuesday, December 9, 2025, Donna held her baby daughter Julie Ann for the first time in 61 years. Terry and Cindy embraced Donna with a gentle hug and soft kiss. Her parents, brother, sister-in-law, countless aunts, uncles, cousins, family, and friends surrounded her with their presence and love. She looked up and saw the face of Jesus and the aura of God, filling her heart with the Holy Spirit. She had finally come home.

Donna Jean Johnson was born in Tracy, MN on June 19, 1935. She had a very happy childhood with her parents Ora and Alphonse, brother Don and many cousins and friends. Alphonse built all of her doll furniture and Ora sewed all of her clothes. She rollerskated, played with her dolls, dressed in old adult clothes for make-believe, danced, sang in choir, fished for crappies with her dad, and helped her mom in the garden. Donna grew up during the Depression and World War II, so times were tough but she loved the life she had and was grateful for it. Faith in God was important to her then and remained so for her entire life. So was her large family who gathered together frequently for dinners, birthdays, and holidays.

Donna had good grades throughout school and made the National Honor Society. She wanted to become an elementary school teacher because of the influence that her 4th grade teacher, Miss Gluth, had on her life. They remained friends for 30 years. Donna attended Mankato State even though her dad wanted her to work at the bank. Donna was voted homecoming queen in 1954, graduated with a teaching degree, and got a position at West Side Elementary in Marshall, MN. That's only 23 miles from Tracy, so everything worked out very well.

Donna met a handsome, funny, kind, thoughtful, young businessman named Terry Bladholm. He treated her like a queen for the next 60+ years. They were married in Tracy and lived in Marshall with their two children Steve and Cindy. Their baby Julie Ann passed away at the Mayo Clinic before the doctors could save her. Heartbroken, Donna and Terry decided to not have another child.

They lived a happy life in Marshall with so many friends and family nearby. She loved being a mother and did volunteer work at church and in the community. However, the desire to return to teaching stayed within her. She finally took some classes at Southwest State in Marshall intending to teach again. That plan was disrupted when Terry and his brother Tom bought a company in Fargo. The family moved there in 1972 and have been here since (except for a few years in Minneapolis).

Donna was very involved with organizations such as First Lutheran Church, El Zagal Shrine, St. John's Hospital, and PEO (which she joined in 1979). Donna was a church lady through and through, serving countless lunches after funerals and participating in various activities. She donated her time and money to many charities and her kind, altruistic spirit was always shining forth. Donna genuinely cared about helping others for her entire life, always happy and smiling, just like her mom.

Donna became a grandmother in 1996 and 1997. She loved Obbie and Carter with her entire being. Donna and Terry spent a huge amount of time with the boys and had a major influence on their lives. They are both fine young men because of that loving devotion. Donna became a great grandma on Thanksgiving. I showed her the picture of Layla Joy every day afterward, telling her who that sweet baby girl is. Donna would intently stare at Layla and I wonder if that kept her going a bit longer.

Donna and Cindy were best friends. Cindy and Kent moved to Minneapolis after Grandma Ora passed away because she wanted to be close to her parents. Donna and Cindy went on many trips so they could share the adventure together. Cindy developed brain cancer in 2015 and passed away one year later. This devastated Donna and Terry as well as the entire family. It took a long time for that grief to subside.

Donna and Terry were quite a couple. They shared many values, beliefs, interests, and they loved each other very much. It is hard to describe the myriad fun times they had with their friends, family, or together. It seemed like there was always something going on. Terry made sure that she had beautiful things as a token of his love. They traveled to many destinations, enjoying being together all along the way. Terry's health deteriorated and Donna increasingly cared for him over his last 8 years. But they still had a lot of wonderful times, always trying to make the best of each opportunity, refusing to let things get them down.

Terry passed away on November 1, 2020. His death, the COVID lockdowns, and her loneliness might have started mom down the path to dementia. We attributed her forgetfulness to the chronic pain she was in and the lingering loss of Terry and Cindy. Shoulder replacement surgery in 2023 tipped her over that threshold. Donna was in the nursing home for the next 33 months. She tried to escape multiple times, but eventually began to somewhat accept being there. Her true inner self came out. She tried to help the staff with meals, hosting afternoon coffee, telling the staff "thank you", "I love you", saying impromptu funny or kind words, singing, and always smiling.

We greatly appreciate the kind, loving care that she received on Willow Lane at Bethany. The compassionate work they do there is way beyond admirable. They will all take the express elevator to heaven and Donna will be there to greet them.



IN LOVING
Memory



Donna Jean Bladholm

June 19, 1935 - December 9, 2025



April 8

Make up a limerick about yourself.

*There once was a girl from
Tracy,
Who loved to wear clothes
fine and lacey.
She had lots of pep and
tried to be hep.
Laughing, dancing and
swinging!*

B BLADHOLM

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*Friendship starts from little
things --
A smile, a word, a deed,
The quiet understanding
Of another person's need --
It grows with every thoughtful
act
Each laugh or secret shared,
And all the little kindnesses
That whisper "someone cared."
Until it blooms forever
In hearts like yours & mine --
It's a flower to be treasured
For its lovely, rare design!*

Remembering

Donna Bladholm

June 19, 1935 - December 9, 2025

Memorial Service

Friday, June 5, 2026 - 11:00 AM

First Lutheran Church

Fargo, North Dakota

Officiant

Pastor Marty Tollefson

Congregational Hymns

Bill Tweten, Accompanist

"When Peace Like a River" #785 (ELW)

"My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less" #597 (ELW)

Recorded Music

"Have I Told You Lately" - Van Morrison

Interment

Saturday, June 6, 2026

Marshall Cemetery

Marshall, Minnesota

All are invited to a reception following the service.



Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good times and bad. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses.

Love is content with the present, it hopes for the future and it doesn't brood over the past. It's the day-in-and-day-out Chronicles of irritations, problems, compromises, small disappointments, big victories and common goals.

If you have love in your life, it can make up for a great many things you lack. If you don't have it, no matter what else there is, it's not enough.

I am standing upon the seashore.
A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean.
She is an object of beauty and strength.
I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.
Then someone at my side says:
"There, she is gone!"

"Gone where?"

Gone from my sight. That is all.
She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side,
and she is just as able to bear the load of living freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her.
And just at the moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!"
There are other eyes watching her coming,
and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"

And that is dying...

~ Henry Van Dyke

