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Dorcas L. Speer

May 4, 1927-July 13, 2009

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Dorcas L. Speer, 82, of Rochester, Minn., passed away peacefully Monday, July 13, 2009, following a courageous battle with lung cancer. An informal gathering to celebrate her life will be at 2:30 p.m. Saturday, July 18, at Charter House, 211 Second St. NW, Rochester, MN (507-266-8572).

Dorcas was born May 4, 1927, in Spencer, [W.Va.](#), and graduated from Calhoun County (W.Va.) High School. She earned a bachelor of arts degree in home economics in 1948 from Purdue University and married her first husband, Benjamin Wheatley, the following year.

After living in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, she and her family moved to Iowa, where she began a long professional affiliation with the Iowa State Extension Service and Iowa State University in Ames. As the women's editor for WOI, the university's radio and television station, Dorcas hosted a local talk show televised each week day at noon and the weekly radio program "Sixty Plus." She later became the station's first on-air consumer reporter.

While living in Ames, she was an active supporter of the arts and community service organizations, participating on the boards of the Shelter House, the Octagon and Ames Public Library. In 1999, she and her second husband, John F. (Jack) Speer, relocated to the Charter House in Rochester, Minn., where they became equally involved in Rochester's community and arts offerings. Until earlier this year, she was an active member of Rochester Public Library, the Southeastern Minnesota Visual Artists group and the Mayo Clinic Art and Architecture Tour organization. She also served as a board member of the Rochester Downtown Alliance and was a past president of the Mayo Clinic Volunteer Services group.

She was a talented seamstress and knitter, an award-winning still photographer and cook, an avid book club member and a welcoming hostess who loved to entertain family and friends. She and Jack were ardent travelers, and after retirement attended numerous Elderhostel events throughout the world.

She is survived by one son, David (Evelyn) Wheatley; two daughters, Katherine (Todd) Bloomfield and Christine (Jeffrey Vilen) Wheatley; two stepdaughters, Anne (Larry) Rutter and Chris (Russell) England; one brother, Albert Ball, and nieces, Kathy Smith and Janet Crawford; grandchildren, Erik, Lauren and Kelley Vilen, and Nicholas (Stephanie) Weber; step-grandchildren, Angela Balius, Kirk (Di) and Eric (Dina) Marty, and Jenny Stout; great-grandchildren, Benjamin and Stella Weber, Patrick and Emily Balius, George and Max Marty, Kyra, Emerson and Alexi Marty, and Jack and Gabe Stout; and many, many devoted friends and colleagues.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Lenna and Lelah Ball, and her husband of 33 years, John F. Speer.

She was dedicated to her family and an inspiration to others. She will be deeply missed by everyone who knew her. The family expresses gratitude for the compassionate care given by Dr. Paul Takahashi, the Mayo Clinic Hospice Program and the staff of the Assisted Living and Skilled Care facilities at the Charter House.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are preferred to Southeastern Minnesota Visual Artists (SEMVA), 16 First St. SW, Rochester, MN 55902 (507-281-4920), the Mayo Cancer Center, Mayo Clinic, Department of Development, 200 First St. SW, Rochester, Minn. 55905 (507-384-8540), the Mayo Hospice Program, 50 Seventh St. NE, Business Center Building 1, Rochester, MN 55905 (507-284-4002), Rochester Public Library, 101 Second St. SE, Rochester, MN 55904 (507-328-2300) or Ames Public Library, 515 Douglas Ave., Ames, IA 50010 (515-239-5656).