

Martha A. (Fries) Burr

The loving, caring heart and spirit of Martha Burr came to a final, peaceful rest at Mountain View Care Center in Bozeman, MT on January 23, 2008.

Martha was born in Mt. Olive, Illinois on December 29, 1913 to John and Charlotte Jane Copeland. After a couple of years of high school, she dropped out to help support the family. In 1932 she married Fred Fries in E. Peoria, IL. Although Martha was a “city girl”, she quickly adapted to farm life by learning to milk cows, raise chickens and drive tractors in the field.

In 1941 the family was expanded to include Daisy and Bruce Oakes, the children of Martha’s sister, Cariena, who died from childbirth complications. Martha lovingly welcomed them into the family joining a daughter, Janie, and a son, Jerry.

In 1944 the family moved from Illinois to Montana where they first had a ranch in Paradise Valley south of Livingston. They next purchased a ranch east of Clyde Park where the family resided for several years. During these years Martha not only cooked (on a wood-fired stove, of course) and kept house for the family and hired hands but also worked in the fields, raised chickens, gardened and sewed much of the children’s clothing. Her cheerful spirit served her well during those years and enriched the lives of all who came in contact with her.

She and Fred divorced in 1952. This started an entirely new phase of her life. She first moved to California where she had a sister and obtained a license to sell real estate.

Subsequent adventures found her in Wyoming where she met Walt Burr whom she married in 1959. They lived in several different states following Walt’s work of power line and substation construction until his death in 1988 in Portland, Oregon. Her love of fishing was nurtured during their years together producing scores of “fish tales” which the family still enjoys sharing.

Martha’s skill with needle and thread continued to grow throughout her life. At one time she had her own knitting shop in Casper, Wyoming, where she taught lessons as well as selling all of the materials and equipment for that craft.

She loved to travel to satisfy her searching curiosity and thirst for new knowledge. Her travels took her to Alaska, Canada, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia and Hong Kong as well as several areas of the United States. All who knew her will miss her loving nature and quick wit.

Martha is survived by her son, Jerry Fries of Bozeman, MT; her niece, Daisy Ruhland of Blasdell, NY; her nephew, Bruce Oakes of Casper, WY; as well as four sisters and two brothers. Also among those left behind are granddaughters Debbie Day, Doreen Olson, Barb Romans and Dawn Fries; two great-granddaughters and six great-grandsons; seven great-great granddaughters and one great-great grandson. She was preceded in death by a daughter, Janie Johnson of Livingston, MT, and an infant daughter as well as one sister.

Memorial services will be held at a later date.