



## Frances Marie Dingman

July 19, 1928 - November 12, 2022

Frances C. Dingman of Orlando passed on Saturday, November 12, at 94 years old following a brief illness. Born Frances Marie Coutu on July 19, 1928, Fran was the eldest of seven children raised in Palmer, Massachusetts by her parents Doris & Aldege Coutu.

Fran (Frannie) was always a creative and introspective person. She was a storyteller to her younger siblings, a member of her high school theater group, and a reporter for her high school newspaper. She met her future husband, Daniel (Danny) Dingman when he came to see her in a school play and was immediately smitten. They married in 1947 in the rectory of her parish church. Because Dan was not Catholic, they could not be married inside the church.

Fran gave birth to their two eldest children, Craig & Monna, in Palmer, MA. With two toddlers in tow, the couple moved west on the famed Route 66 to California in 1953, part of the great post-war western migration. It was an adventurous undertaking as Dan had no work lined up and no real connections, but they trusted each other and were determined to build a good life for their family. In California they found friendship with other young couples through church and employment. These friends became surrogate families for each other, creating friendships that have lasted a lifetime.

Settling first in Whittier, CA the family grew by two more, with the addition of daughter Teresa and son David. While Dan began to build a reputation as a

cost estimator for large construction projects, Fran pursued her love of books by working as a librarian. Monna & Craig have fond memories of attending children's' reading circles at the library and being able to bring favorite books home.

The family moved to Oxnard, CA in the late 1950's, growing their circle of lifelong friends and welcoming the arrival of their two youngest children, Martha & Carol. Fran began trying out different art forms to express her creative side. These included mosaics, pen & pencil, and pastels. Keeping track of six children did not leave much time for art but Fran wasn't deterred, finding opportunities for a quick sketch here and a mosaic tile placement there.

In keeping with her Catholic faith Fran worked to serve those less fortunate. She served as a volunteer at a detention center for young women, providing friendship and mentorship. She & Dan also accepted the call to welcome into our family a woman abandoned by her own family at Camarillo State Hospital. What started as an invitation to Thanksgiving dinner evolved into a wonderful & beloved lifelong addition to the family.

1964 brought another move, this time to the small but growing community of Calabasas, CA. Buying a home in the still-under-construction development of Malibu Canyon, the family found community on Veva Way. Here were families just like ours: young married couples with many young children. The stay-at-home mothers bonded over morning coffee, crying babies, and building strong families. These too would become long and treasured friendships.

Here, Fran and Dan counseled young men considering conscience objection to the Vietnam War and continued their advocacy for racial parity in housing opportunities. Fran was not a public speaker; she was not a protester or a placard carrier. She led by quiet example. She spoke softly and kindly but with

unshakable conviction.

Dan began working for the Walt Disney Company in Burbank in 1965, and in 1970 he was transferred to Orlando, FL to begin work on Disney World. This was a difficult move for Fran as she had found a home in Calabasas. Leaving her friends and church community behind to start all over again in Florida was very trying. Still, she found solace in her family and in her books. Always an avid reader, books had been her refuge since childhood.

At 46 years old, Fran found an indentation on her breast. In an era with few options for breast cancer treatment, Fran went in for a biopsy and woke without a breast. The diagnosis and treatment shook Dan to the core, terrified of losing the person he cherished most in his life. Fran handled it with quiet strength. She recovered and never looked back.

Following a move to Tampa and seeing her two youngest daughters graduate from high school and move on to new adventures, Fran was finally able to throw herself fully into her art. Joining her local art center, Fran focused on watercolor – entering and winning many art shows. She was never without a sketch pad and pencil, delighting grandchildren with a quick sketch or hand painted birthday card. She encouraged them to try their own hand at art, applauding every unique creation.

Following Dan's stroke in 2004, they moved back to Orlando to live with daughter Teresa, her husband Paul, and their young son William. Fran continued her artwork and also became deeply committed to the Peace Orphanage in Mexico. Having grown up in a struggling family, the plight of unwanted, orphaned, mistreated, or abandoned children tugged at her heart. Fran lived her faith and gave generously to those in need.

In 2013, Fran faced her most difficult trial as Dan's health declined and his heart finally stopped. Surrounded by family, Dad passed from this life. Fran faced her grief through her art and poetry, some of which we are only now discovering. She turned her loss into a path for us to follow by creating a game she called Poetry Toss. It brings out the inner poet in all of us, giving us a way to face our own joys and sorrows.

Eight months after losing Dan, Fran faced an immeasurable loss in the sudden and unexpected death of her second son, David. While she had had time to prepare for Dan's passing, David's was a sudden shock to all of us. Still, Fran reached out to comfort his wife and children, even though her own grief was overwhelming.

In the passing years Fran continued to be strong in the face of adversity and to be present in the life of her family. As her mobility declined, she became adept with her iPad, active in Facebook groups, text chains, and Instagram. She embraced technology as a way of staying connected to family and friends. She participated in online poetry groups, started a weekly drawing challenge with friends of all ages, and even recorded video segments for daughter Carol & husband Sam's nonprofit organization's "Senior Home Entertainment" YouTube channel.

As our family grew through marriages, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews, Fran made time for each and every one of us. She knew us all as individuals and cherished us all as family. She opened her heart to the friends we brought in, loved our cats and dogs, laughed with us in good times, and held us in the difficult times. Each one of us was allowed to feel as though we, alone, had a special relationship with "Mom," "GranFran," "Aunt Fran," "Fran," "Frannie." "Mamma D," and "Mrs. Dingman." By whichever name we called her, she answered with love.

Fran is survived by her children: Craig (Denise) of Portland, OR; Monna (Anne) of Los Alamos, CA; Teresa (Paul) of Orlando, FL; Martha (John) of Lewisville, NC; Carol (Sam) of Los Alamos, CA; and by her sister Joan (Dave) of Haddam, CT and brother Paul (Evelyn) of Chicopee, MA.

She is also survived by her grandchildren: Scott (Marnie) of Atlanta, GA; Jenna of Winston-Salem, NC, Ericka (Ben) of Greensboro, NC; Kadie (Patrique) of Winston-Salem, NC; Hailey (Ryan) of Winnabo, NC; Danielle of Taos, NM; Monica of Taos, NM; Naomi of Taos, NM; Henry of Colorado; William of Orlando, FL; and by 16 great-grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her husband Daniel B. Dingman; son, David F. Dingman; and by other beloved sisters, brothers, friends, and near-family.

Interment services will be held at a later date in Los Alamos, CA.

In lieu of flowers the family suggests that donations be made to The Frances C Dingman Scholarship for the Creative Arts at The Los Alamos Foundation, PO Box 477, Los Alamos, CA 93440, or online at <https://thelosalamosfoundation.org>

Donations may also be made to the St Mary Magdalen Church - Peace Orphanage Fund, 861 Maitland Ave, Altamonte Springs, FL 32701 or online at <https://stmarymagdalen.org>

The family of Frances C. Dingman invites you to leave a message of condolence on the tribute wall created in her memory.

# Tribute Wall

KJ

“ I just learned of Mrs Dingman's passing - I will always remember her sweet smile and gentle kindness.... and a few funny stories from our teenage shenanigans. My heart is with her family.

Kathie Lundquist Jones - December 30, 2022 at 02:56 PM

PC

“ Paul And Evelyn Coutu lit a candle in memory of Frances Marie Dingman



Paul and Evelyn Coutu - November 21, 2022 at 02:11 PM

EC

“ She was more than an reporter for her high newspaper, she was Editor-in-Chief!! Six years later, her brother, Paul, was also Editor-in-Chief for the same newspaper!

Evelyn Coutu L Coutu - November 17, 2022 at 08:10 PM

DJ

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with our entire family and anyone who knew our sweet Aunt Fran. I will always cherish the beautiful handmade cards she sent. She was an Angel on earth that God gifted to us and what a beautiful person he chose. She is back with her beloved Uncle Dan. 🙏🙏🙏🙏❤️❤️❤️❤️

Debbie Joyce - November 17, 2022 at 04:38 PM

DJ

“ *Debbie Joyce lit a candle in memory of  
Frances Marie Dingman* ”



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**Debbie Joyce** - November 17, 2022 at 04:32 PM