

Casper ran service planning weddings - Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (WI) - July 8, 1997

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Elise Ott Casper grew up among Milwaukee's social elite and served them for a while as a professional social secretary. Then she moved to Europe and became part of the anthroposophy movement, hoping to make the world a better place

Casper died of heart failure June 22 in Chicago at age 78. A service will be held at 11 a.m. Friday at Forest Home Cemetery, 2405 W. Forest Home Ave.

She was president of the Junior League from 1951-'53 and proprietor of Elise Personalized Social Services from 1953-'67, helping young women plan weddings and other events.

Four decades later, her advice might seem quaint, but it was heeded in the 1950s. For example, in 1956 she stated:

"No tissues in the wedding invitations. And I'll tell you why. Anything functional should not be used socially. The tissue is functional; it blots the inks. The engraving should be dry and sent without tissues."

One of Casper's great-grandfathers was German immigrant William Steinmeyer. Fresh from a Civil War Wisconsin infantry unit in 1865, he opened a store that later claimed to be the nation's largest independent retail grocery under one roof.

When he opened his establishment at what is now N. 4th St. and W. Juneau Ave. and announced he would give no credit, many predicted a quick failure. But the cash-only policy allowed him to sell at a lower price. That, along with unheard-of services, some of the best produce on the market and delicacies unavailable elsewhere in the city, brought in the customers.

In 1890, the grocer moved to a new store on the corner of N. 3rd St. and W. Highland Ave. The store closed in 1949, but the Steinmeyer name, held aloft by two red-brick cherubs, can still be seen on the building.

Casper, daughter of Walter and Louise Ott, grew up on the east side and spent summers at a family home on Waukesha County's Pine Lake, said her friend, Jean Lindemann, of Nashotah. She also traveled to Europe with her parents.

A tall, slim girl, Casper attended Rosemary Hall prep school in Greenwich, Conn., and debuted in 1937 before studying for two years at the University of Munich in Germany. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin in Madison with a psychology degree after marrying U.S. Navy Ensign Robert Casper.

The couple had one son, Timothy, but they divorced in 1946. Casper never remarried.

She had been a volunteer for the Junior League's efforts to set up the Milwaukee Blood Center, the Curative Workshop and the children's program at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

In 1964, her son was killed and she was injured in an accident in Tours, France, when a truck swerved into a car she was driving. She suffered a broken arm and other injuries.

By 1967, she had tired of planning weddings, so she sold her business and moved to Paris. She soon became deeply involved in anthroposophy, a spiritual and mystical doctrine started by Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner. He had proposed practical applications in all areas of life, including education, science, agriculture and the arts.

Settling in West Germany near Switzerland, Casper often came home to visit friends and work with the movement here, said Paul Riesen, who met her in 1933 and said he introduced her to anthroposophy in about 1950.

The movement has developed the Waldorf School, which uses art in every class and where elementary students compile their own textbooks, Riesen said.

In the early 1980s, Casper moved to Chicago, where anthroposophy flourished.

She is survived by a brother, Frederick Ott, of Wauwatosa, and sisters Beatrice Haemmerle, of Sun Valley, Idaho, and Louise Van Antwerpen, of Chenequa

CITATION (TURABIAN STYLE)

Sentinel staff, ELDON KNOCH. "Casper ran service planning weddings." *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, July 8, 1997. *NewsBank: Access World News – Historical and Current*. <https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/0EB82AC42F67C2A4>.

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