



Barbara Dennon

March 25, 1922 - January 29, 2013

Barbara Dennon “went up” to supervise her husband Michael Dennon in “the big pie shop in the sky,” leaving from her home in Traverse City, Michigan on January 29, 2013, at the age of 90. Not one to take herself too seriously, or flaunt her accomplishments, Barbara identified herself as just a “baker’s wife” for her 50th high school reunion biography. Those who knew her, though, got the joke — and they knew that she meant so much more to so many in Traverse City.

Barbara Mae Hansen was born in Muskegon, Michigan on March 25, 1922, the daughter of Mabel and Pete Hansen, Muskegon’s Chief of Police for 27 years. The baby of the family, young “Bobby” loved to go off by herself to the movies — though Chief Hansen made she sure she was always watched over by Officer Pete on her trips downtown. As a young girl, she was just as likely to be “camping” at the shore or holed up in a cabin in the woods with her girlfriends for days at a time, as she was to be at home with her faithful German Shepherd Queenie, or visiting (her beloved mother’s sister) Aunt Pearl and Uncle George Peterson, who had no children of their own.

As independent as she was — driving by herself at the age of 13, and getting a job downtown at a soda fountain — the adventurous 14 year-old Barbara met a dashing young Greek named Mike while ice skating one day. According to her, she took one look at him “and that was it.” After graduating from Muskegon High in 1940, Barbara went off to Michigan State, where Mike was already studying chemical engineering.

The truth can now be told: while Barb and Mike were still students at Michigan State, they got carried away one weekend while standing up for some dear friends, and secretly tied the knot on September 23, 1941. One year later to the day, they walked down the aisle of Muskegon’s St. Paul’s Episcopal Church — and never told their parents about their secret, spur-of-the- moment wedding. Of course, in later years, when marking anniversaries, there was some confusion about how many years they’d actually been married.

Once they were officially married, Barb worked to put Mike through his last year of college — and he spent the rest of his life paying her back.

After Mike went into the Navy and left for duty on the battleship Wisconsin, Barbara moved back to Muskegon to be with her parents, while she awaited the birth of her first child, Anne. After the war was over, the young family moved to Schenectady, NY where

Mike worked for the Schenectady Varnish Company. From there they moved first to Roslyn, Long Island, where her second child, Chris, was born, and then to Glen Rock, New Jersey, where they lived for ten years, while Barb raised Anne and Chris, made many dear friends and found time to volunteer in the community, including serving as the president of the Glen Rock Women's Club. After nearly twenty years on the East coast, they moved back to Michigan in 1962, so Mike could help his brother Pete Dendinos grow what had been their father's Muskegon pie business into a frozen food company, Chef Pierre.

Barbara went on to spend 50 happy years in Traverse City. Starting off in their first home here, an historic house on Washington Street, Barb held down the fort while Mike traveled continuously, selling pies across the country. Soon she began making the life-long friendships she treasured in Traverse City, Glen Lake and Crystal Downs. With her friends in tow, Barb took up everything from cross country skiing, golf and tennis, to t'ai chi, tap dancing and flying lessons — not to mention some wild canoe trips on the Crystal River. Becoming a champion world traveler, Barbara ventured off on her own to ride elephants in Thailand, make the climb to Machu Picchu and go snorkeling in the Galapagos, while bringing dear friends and family with her to go on safari in Africa, sail the Mediterranean and ski in Norway.

Barbara showed that same spirit in helping the many local institutions that became dear to her heart. She started off as a volunteer and candy-striper at Munson Hospital, and ended up becoming a major donor to the hospital. She enjoyed being a member of the local Garden Club, but Barb was also a proud and long-time supporter of the Women's Resource Center. She was always ready to pitch in, whether it was helping students at Interlochen, Pathfinder, or NMC, raising funds for the Symphony, the Opera House, Michael's Place, and Father Fred, or supporting the arts directly by encouraging the work of local artists like Charles Murphy, Bill Allen, Karl Sporck and Verna Bartnick.

It was Barbara's friendship with Paul Welch, a professor of art at Northwestern Michigan College, that led to the idea of assembling a small teaching collection of artworks for the College, which in turn led to some memorable purchasing trips to Chicago and New York, in search of suitable pieces to place in the art department and the College library. Little did she know that the little seeds she planted in cahoots with Paul would eventually become her proudest achievement: the Barbara and Michael Dennis Museum Center, dedicated in September of 1992.

Nothing gave her more pleasure than knowing how many people benefited from the museum. For years afterward — whether she was in Horizon Books picking up recommendations from her favorite bookseller Lois, enjoying a concert at Interlochen under the roof that she and Mike helped build over Kresge Auditorium, at her weekly Friday appointment with Sandra, or just out to enjoy a bite at Rounds, Louie Sleder's or the J&S — people would come up to tell her how wonderful they thought the latest exhibit

or concert at the Dennon Museum was — and how important the Museum was to Traverse City.

Barbara Dennon left her mark on Traverse City. And she leaves so many friends smiling and laughing, from Traverse City, Glen Rock, Glen Lake, the Homestead and Dunn's Farm, to La Jolla, Rancho Santa Fe and Del Ray Beach, Florida.

For all of us, Barb had a twinkle in her eye, a laugh in her heart, a devilish sense of humor — and some devilishly good jokes.

Barbara was preceded in death by her husband of 70 years, Michael H. Dennon, her brother Leon Hansen, and her sister Lois Schroeder. She is survived by her daughters Anne Marie (William) Shuyler of Alexandria, Virginia, and Mary Christine Dennon of Traverse City, Michigan, grandchildren Michael (Veronica) Demmer and John Demmer, Christina Shuyler and Alexandra Shuyler, and her cousin Dugald MacArthur of Elkins Park (Philadelphia), Pennsylvania.

A visitation will be held from 3:00 to 6:00 pm at the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home on Saturday, February 2, 2013. A private memorial service is planned. You are invited to sign Barbara's online guestbook at www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com. Memorial contributions may be directed to the Dennon Museum and to Michael's Place.

We want to thank all those who looked after Barbara over the years: from special friends like the late Margaret Tarsa of Maple City, Barbara at the TC Country Club, and Erika, Petra and Yola at the Silver Swan, to all the many, many dear friends who visited her regularly — especially Dave and his friendly crew from the Elmwood Township Fire and Rescue — and to those who cared so tenderly for “the Queen” at home: Barbara Goodearl, Barb Allison, Christina, Jen, Juston, Kae Beth, Melissa, Nancy, Sarah, Sue and Tom. There was a warm spot in her heart for all of you.

Events

FEB **Visitation** 03:00PM - 06:00PM

2

Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home
305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

Comments



“ Dear Dennos Family,
I am sorry to read of your loss. A loved one lost can grieve the heart, and make us yearn for tomorrow, when Jehovah will keep the promise he made of no pain, no death and no sorrow. This promise is found at Revelation 21:4. Can you imagine a time when no one will die? What a wonderful time that will be! we will not fear death and we will be able to live forever with our loved ones. I hope this thought helps you cope and to know that we can look to the future with a hope.

Samantha - February 06, 2013 at 09:39 AM



“ I will miss having coffee with Barbara and discussing various topics. I enjoyed her insight and wit tremendously. My sincerest condolences go out to the Dennos family during this difficult time.

Ralph Munch, Huntington National Bank

Ralph Munch - February 03, 2013 at 02:46 PM



“ Barb and I shared our 'get well' days at Orchard Creek. Our mealtime table was always where the laughs and jokes were--and where one could find a solution to most of the world's problems. I met many of the family members during that time as well: my deepest sympathy goes out to them.

Judith Lindenau - February 02, 2013 at 07:39 AM



“ My heartfelt love to the Dennos family. Barb was a great lady.

Barbara Stacey

Barbara Stacey - February 01, 2013 at 05:21 PM



“ I will always be grateful for the support that Barb gave me as I started my pottery career in Leelanau. The encouragement given me by the entire Dennos family was instrumental in the success of Brisling Pottery. Thank you Barb and all for the love and friendship you showed to me and my Dad, Claus. Karl Sporck.

Karl Sporck - February 01, 2013 at 01:50 AM



“ Condolences Chris
Bob March

Bob March - January 31, 2013 at 05:50 PM



“ Barbara and Michael Dennos had profound impact on this community and of course on me, having been given the opportunity to participate in the creation and then to direct what became the Michael and Barbara Dennos Museum Center; a name they only reluctantly accepted, for the facility they invested in first, to help make it a reality.

We have now lost both of these two wonderful people who in supporting the creation of the Dennos Museum Center touched this community, the State, the Nation and indeed the world. This picture of Mike and Barb with Bob James and five amazing young musicians from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music captures the reality of that international impact when they performed here in 2006 with Bob's Angels of Shanghai project.

Thank you Barb for your quiet generosity, kindness, and strong will when needed. You and Mike leave a great legacy in this community, and the pie was not bad either!

Gene Jenneman



Eugene A Jenneman - January 31, 2013 at 01:22 PM



“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Eugene A Jenneman - January 31, 2013 at 12:52 PM

“



“ Condolences for your loss from the children of Patricia Sikkenga.
Robert and Laura Sikkenga

Laura Sikkenga - January 30, 2013 at 09:24 PM