



## Constance Patricia Klaasen

August 6, 1920 - April 8, 2017

Constance “Connie” Patricia Klaasen

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Some called her Connie, while others called her Pat. She was mom to her daughters, Patty to her husband, and Condido to one of her sons-in-law. She was Oma to some of her great-grandchildren, Aunt Pat to her many adored and adoring nieces and nephews, and after the birth of her first grandchild, she introduced herself to everyone as Grandma.

It really didn't matter what you called her, because everyone knew her to be the same thing: one classy lady.

Constance Patricia Klaasen was born on Aug. 6, 1920 in Interlochen, Mich. inside what is now known as The Hofbrau. At the time, the restaurant – originally the size of a humble, single-family home – was called Filip’s Tavern and was run by Connie’s Bohemian parents, Hypolit Kamill and Sophia Beatrice (Pechota) Filip. It was here that Connie developed her love of the outdoors, often picking berries and mushrooms in the back woods of Interlochen to help her mother prepare her famous recipes (legend has it that Al Capone was particularly fond of her pickles and rye bread). Connie and her six brothers and sisters were right at home with the locals and artists visiting Interlochen Arts Academy that would frequent their family’s business. In fact, it was their home – the family of nine lived right upstairs, which was pretty tight quarters for a family that ate that much garlic.

Connie traveled in to Traverse City for school and boarded in town with her sisters during the winter months while they attended Traverse City High School. There, she met a group of girls that would become her lifelong bosom buddies. They dubbed themselves The Ever-Sweating Members of the Never Sweat Club, a name she somehow thought wasn’t that interesting (“What did it mean?! Oh honey, it’s just a name. Ask me a better question.”). She graduated high school at the age of 16, after which she moved to live in Traverse City full-time.

Throughout her teens and up until motherhood, she worked as a mannequin model for Milliken's department store. The job required her to stand in one position for hours in the Front Street windows to show off the latest fashions. She also worked for Beauty Counselor, selling the cosmetic and skincare line to supplement her family's income. Later, she modeled for the downtown clothing store Bartling's. After her last walk down the runway at 81, Bruce and Joyce Rogers honored her for the 50-plus years that she'd modeled for them. She quit when they did – the owners decided to close the store in 2001.

After high school, Connie began a career in secretarial work with a job at the Automobile Club of Michigan. Her good work there led to a stint working for Senator Milliken and G. Mennen Williams, to be followed by a secretarial position with Munson Medical Center's radiology department, and the State of Michigan's Department of Natural Resources. She ended her career at the Traverse City Regional Psychiatric Hospital, where she was the supervisor and head of medical records. Years later, she jumped back into the work force to volunteer her time to her daughter and son-in-law, helping them stay afloat and sane as they launched their new business, Mail Boxes Etc. (now The UPS Store).

On Feb. 26, 1943, Connie married William "Bill" J. Klaasen of Traverse City in New York City at The Little Church Around the Corner. Bill was on three days of leave from his Naval position as an LST machinist in WWII, and didn't see his bride again until the end of the war in 1945 (although they sent hundreds of love letters to each other across the ocean). Upon his return, he built a small home for the two of them right on Green Lake in Interlochen. It was called The Wooden Shoe, and it remained Connie's most cherished place for the rest of her life. They raised their three daughters both there and at their later home on 10th Street in Traverse City. Between the two locations, it was said that young men came calling for the daughters by car, by boat, by horse, and by plane, much to Bill's chagrin and Connie's delight.

Bill's work for the Navy and his later career as the fire chief of the Traverse City Fire Department was a fitting match for Connie, ever the public servant. While Bill was in the war, she volunteered for the Red Cross as a nurse's aide. Her daughters recall walking door-to-door with her as she volunteered for the U.S. Census Bureau, only to see her the next day at school where she was a parent-teacher officer as well as a Brownie and Girl Scout leader. She was an active member of both the Daisy Chain and the Zonta Club, and volunteered at Willow Hill Elementary and Central Grade Schools; most of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren received their educations at one of the two schools.

Connie made it her business to vote in every election. She was born 12 days before

women earned the right to vote in all 50 states, something that surely wasn't a coincidence. In fact, one might argue that it was in the national public interest not to keep her right to say her piece from her. We'd never hear the end of it anyway.

You could mark the calendar by what came out of her storied kitchen. Christmas brought kolaches, a Czech pastry and family tradition. She hung homemade noodles on the backs of chairs for her wintertime chicken noodle soup. Spring sent her out into the woods near the cottage, where she could tell an edible mushroom from a poisonous one by sight, often telling us that if she was still alive in the morning, we could eat some too. Summer brought mulberries from the side of her house, followed by strawberry and raspberry jams and her famous cherry pie. Then came the canned tomatoes and, last but most certainly not least, her pickles.

She could knit a hat in a day and read a book in half. She was known for her wit and her beauty, for her stubbornness and her sense of humor. She preferred traveling the world by bus over plane, and loved the Pistons (especially Chauncey Billups). She played a mean game of Scrabble, and had a distinguished natural white shock of hair that served as an exclamation point. She never missed a dance recital, choir concert, orchestra performance, sporting event, or school function, and she signed every letter with a lipstick kiss. She loved NPR and IPR, put salt and tomato juice in her beer, and wouldn't let you leave the house without taking some food with you. She remembered how to write "I love you" in shorthand until the end of her life, ate the tops off yellow dandelions as if she were chomping on a lollipop, and named her cats after whatever big thing was in the news at the time. She always said she'd stop looking at good-looking men when she was six feet under, which no doubt explains why she chose to be cremated instead.

And, of course, she was happiest when at the cottage.

Connie passed away on April 8, 2017 at the Hospice House in Traverse City, where she was surrounded by family and was sent off with a face showered in lipstick kisses. She is survived by her beloved daughters and their partners, Patricia "Tricia" Lynne (Rick) Smith, Kathleen "Kathe" Anita (Jeffrey) Dohm, and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Cobb (Edward Fisher) Davis; her treasured grandchildren and their partners Michael (Jeannette) Smith, Kristie (Chad) Collins, Zachary (Jennifer) Ligon, DJ (Tina) Dohm, Kaili (Joseph) Caron, Quinn (Joshua Stoolman) Davis, and Tje (Cam White) Dohm; her darling great-grandchildren Matthew (Katie) Zenner, Madison Zenner, Paige and Alexa Ligon, Lauren and Nolan Collins, Makena and Lincoln Dohm, and Mitchel, Lilah, and Finley Caron; her nieces and nephews, many of whom she held as close in her heart as she would her own children; and her many dear cousins, grandnieces, grandnephews, and great-grandnieces and

nephews.

Connie is preceded in death by her parents and her husband; her son, William J. Klaasen, Jr.; and her siblings, Violet Filip, Virginia "Virge" Phelps, Joseph B. Filip, Hypolit "Junie" "HK" Filip, Jr., Marjory "Marge" H. Tobias, Adeline "Addie" K. Dallas, and Anita "Neta" F. Way.

Please join our family this summer as we celebrate Connie's life where she was born and raised, The Hofbrau, located at 2784 M-137 in Interlochen on July 22, 2017 from 1 - 4 p.m. We will honor a life well-lived with great memories, her favorite foods, music, beverages, and most of all dear family and friends. Please come raise a glass, and make sure you get the words right to Connie's famous toast: here's to us, who's like us, damn few.

For those that feel moved to do so, the family has asked that memorial donations be made to one of the following of Connie's favorites:

Interlochen Center for the Arts

Online -

<http://www.interlochen.org/memorial>, noting IPR/NPR Constance P Klaasen Memorial

By check –

Interlochen Center for the Arts

Office of Advancement

PO Box 199

Interlochen, Mich. 49643

Memo: IPR/NPR Constance P Klaasen Memorial

Interlochen Public Library

Children's Department

9700 Riley Road

Interlochen, Mich. 49643

Memo: Constance P Klaasen Memorial/Children's Dept.

Willow Hill Elementary School Library

Klaasen Memorial

1250 Hill Street

Traverse City, Mich. 49684

Please note that checks should be made out to TCAPS, with Klaasen Memorial - Willow H

ill Library in the memo.

The family is being served by The Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home and Cremation Services. Please share your memories and thoughts on Connie's tribute page <http://www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com>.

# Comments

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“ To all my cousins it is a time to share the memories of a wonderful woman who was my Aunt Pat a special aunt and a friend who will be truly missed especially for me at the lakefront that was and is a gathering place during the summer months. We are never ready to loose our loved ones, but we know there is a time and season for all of us to come ,so we morn our loss together, and share the wonderful memories of her life well lived with each other, and i smile for having had her in my life.



**Sandra Dallas Smith** - May 02, 2017 at 09:31 AM

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“ My dear Liz and Quinn,  
Your mom/grandmother was a treasure! I remember her beautiful smile and sweet, gentle voice--an angel, indeed. Her beauty was beyond the surface--she illuminated from love within!

Miss B.

**C.Brewer** - April 24, 2017 at 11:12 PM

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“ Lizzy! Joan and I will forever remember all the wonderful times we shared with you and your mom treasuring and looking at so many antiques at numerous estate sales. We are so very sorry for your families loss. I can hardly believe it was just a few days ago that I saw you and Connie and she recognized me at the Pavilions. So very sorry but so many memories.

All our love Joan and Steve.....

**Steve McLain** - April 12, 2017 at 01:13 PM