



Dorothy French

July 3, 1925 - January 8, 2021

Dorothy Canterbury Wilhelm French, 95 of Traverse City, passed away suddenly from cardiac arrest at Evergreen Cottage at the Pavilions.

Born July 3, 1925, to George William and Grace Edna (Canterbury) Wilhelm in Traverse City, Dorothy was the second of their four children. She was proud to be the granddaughter of area pioneer, Anthony J. Wilhelm, who came to Traverse City as a child with his parents from Prague, Bohemia, and in 1886 founded Wilhelm's Store on the corner of Union and 8th Street.

Dorothy graduated from Traverse City High and was the first local student to receive a scholarship to the University of Michigan from the newly formed U of M Club. She graduated in 1947 with a degree in psychology and received her second degree in Occupational Therapy in 1949. While at the university, she met her future husband, C. Wayne French. On October 15, 1949, they were married at the First Congregational Church in Traverse City.

Wayne's career with US Steel had them relocating about every 5 years in the first 30 years of marriage, often joking that it was time to move when the house needed painting. They lived in Cleveland, Ohio; Yardley, Pennsylvania; Naperville, Illinois; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and twice in Joliet, Illinois. Along the way they had two daughters, Lynn and Sara. Dotty's career had to take a back seat to Wayne's, but she had an accomplished career of her own. In each new place she found work as an Occupational Therapist, usually rising to the top position before moving and starting over again. She laughingly remembers teaching an adult education class in toy making, especially marionettes, when she first started out. Her greatest career achievement was obtaining the grant and starting a pre-school program for handicapped children while Director at the Easter Seal Center in Joliet. It provided the children the opportunity to socialize with others of similar abilities and provided a much needed respite of a few hours a week for their parents. For many years afterward, she received Christmas updates on how the children were doing from their families. Among her many volunteer activities, she fondly recalls serving as a tour

guide at Heintz Hall for the Performing Arts while in Pittsburgh. In 1981, Wayne retired and they moved to The Homestead in Glen Arbor, where they lived for 20 years before moving to Traverse City.

Dotty will be remembered for her kind heart and quick smile, as well as her ability to engage total strangers in conversation, often while in line at the grocery store, much to the chagrin of her teen daughters, but a skill that served Wayne well in various social settings for work. She belonged to many clubs, and enjoyed golf, cross country skiing, and travel, going to cities too numerous to list. Dotty was a talented painter, but will be remembered most for her skill in the kitchen. She loved to cook and served countless wonderful meals. In retirement, she put together a cookbook of her favorite recipes, some handed down from her mother and others that she developed or collected over the years, which she printed and gave to family and friends.

Dorothy is survived by her daughters, Lynn (John) Zeiger and Sara (Tom) Shallop; granddaughters, Abbie (Dan) Leino and Leslie (Luke) Hofmeister; an unborn great granddaughter; sisters-in-law Ardis Knarr and Mary Carol Devey; as well as numerous nieces, nephews and cousins; and her beloved cat, Simon.

She was preceded in death by her parents, George and Grace Wilhelm; her husband, Wayne French; and siblings, Alice (Jack) Merrill, Anthony "Tony" (Sally) Wilhelm, George Howard (Peggy) Wilhelm.

Visitation will be held on Tuesday, January 19th from 2 to 4 PM at the Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home. Burial at Oakwood Cemetery will be at a later date for family.

Memorial contributions in Dorothy's honor may be directed to the University of Michigan, the Grand Traverse Pavilions, or the Cherryland Humane Society.

Cemetery

Oakwood Cemetery

1325 East Eighth Street
Traverse City, MI, 49686

Events

JAN **Visitation** 02:00PM - 04:00PM

19

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

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Reynolds Jonkhoff Funeral Home & Cremation Services - January 19 at 03:37 PM



“ Lynn Zeiger is following this tribute.

Lynn Zeiger - February 27 at 01:41 PM



“ I loved Dottie. She was so much fun to be around and to talk with. I loved her sassiness! I have missed her so much since the days of the History Center but I have many great memories of her and her amazing stories!

Maddie Lundy - January 26 at 11:37 AM



“ i worked at the pavions . and i got to know her she was like a grandma to me. i got to meet her cat. we talked about our lives.



abbie findley - January 21 at 11:22 PM



“ Dottie was one of the first women I got to know through AAUW. She was always so supportive and never missed a beat on anything. I really enjoyed sitting down and listening to her tell stories about Wilhelms and what town was like when she was young. She also brought a lot of great insight from her whole life experience that I am so grateful I was able to learn from her. She will be greatly missed.
Amy Shamroe

Amy Shamroe - January 15 at 05:22 PM



“ I remember fondly Dottie and her special ways. When the computer age was introduced, Dottie learned this new skill and began to produce the AAUW news letter using the computer skills. I am also remembering she might have been a charter member from 1954. She was a proud and devoted member of AAUW. Irene Brown

irene brown - January 15 at 05:20 PM



“ I knew Dottie through AAUW and took her to our group's monthly luncheons at Lobdell's. She enjoyed conversations with other members and sharing updates with them. I will always remember those luncheons with Dottie smiling/laughing with her glass of wine. We enjoyed her stories from her long, interesting life. She will be missed.
Joyce Jasinski



Joyce Jasinski - January 14 at 11:53 AM



“ It seems she never missed the luncheons and made sure she got there early enough to get her order in at the bar. I always enjoyed her sassiness!

Bonnie Willings - January 15 at 12:56 PM



“ Aunt Dottie was one of the most loving, caring, and giving people I know. I will miss her greatly. Her smile was contagious, and her laugh would always bring a smile to your face. She will forever have a special place in my heart.

Some of my earliest, and best, memories of Aunt Dottie were at our family cottage on Long Lake in Traverse City, Michigan. It was always a treat to wake up at the cottage when she was there, because the place would be filled with the delightful smell of blueberry pancakes. Aunt Dottie was a fabulous cook and loved to share that passion with others. Dinner when she was cooking was not an occasion to miss. “Dotty’s Cook Book” is one of my most treasured possessions.

Aunt Dottie was a gifted occupational therapist, and was always willing to give of her time. My sister Abbie had cerebral palsy, and we would regularly make the trip down to Joliet IL so she could work with my sister, mom & dad.

Aunt Dottie will be greatly missed, but her memory and light will live on in all who knew her. My condolences go out to everyone in the family.

Chris Wilhelm - January 13 at 05:13 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Chris Wilhelm - January 13 at 04:31 PM



“ Aunt Dottie had the most positive attitude of anyone I have ever met! She really embraced and loved life and she genuinely loved and enjoyed people. She had an opinion and could get frustrated about injustice, unfairness, apathy and sometimes her own physical limitations, but I never saw her let it keep her down! She enjoyed telling stories about her life experiences, and I loved hearing them, many of which involved her family, which she adored. She was so proud of being one of the original locals. She loved Traverse City and embraced how it has changed over the years. I'm sorry she didn't make it to 100, which was a goal she would giggle about. I'm sorry she didn't get to hug her family before she left. I'm sorry she won't get to meet her great grand daughter. I'm grateful that she had a wonderful, full life and that she let me be part of it. My sincere condolences to Sara and Lynn and all of the family.



Earlene - January 13 at 02:53 PM



“ Lynn and Sara, I am sorry to hear about your mom's passing. She and my mom, Jane Bensley Linden, were lifelong friends and had such wonderful times together. My heartfelt sympathies to you both and your families. Jennifer Linden Gay

Jennifer Gay - January 12 at 05:06 PM