



Mary Lillian Borgerson

August 9, 1929 - April 20, 2017

Mary Borgerson died April 20, 2017 at her apartment in Traverse City with her daughter and loving caregiver by her side. She was 87.

She was born Mary Lillian Earl in Buckley, Michigan on August 9, 1929. Her mother Fae, a trained soprano, was an art and music teacher, and her father Harley worked in banking. The family lived briefly in Northport, then moved downstate to Vernon. Mary took piano and voice lessons, and by high school, she was singing solos for local churches. Mary also wrote letters to local boys who were away at war and this guided her travel plans later in life, as she journeyed to memorials and gravesites of those who had died. She graduated from Durand High School in 1948.

Mary moved to Princeton, New Jersey to attend Westminster Choir College. After her first year, she returned to Michigan to help care for her ailing father. When he died, Mary moved to New York City, living at the corner of Spring and Dominic Streets, teaching in the Bronx, and studying voice at the old Metropolitan Opera with Madame Ercolé. She later returned to Westminster Choir College, and completed her Bachelors of Music degree, majoring in voice and organ. As a coloratura soprano with the Westminster Choir, she sang solos with the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Arturo Toscanini, and with the Philadelphia Orchestra directed by Eugene Ormandy. She enjoyed attending parties at the Princeton eating clubs and traveling into New York City for opera and musicals, waiting in line for the reduced-priced student tickets.

After graduation, Mary returned to Michigan, teaching music and band in the Kingsley and Traverse City Public Schools. A lost sterling silver lighter led her childhood acquaintance, L. Keith Borgerson, to track her down, within weeks they were engaged, and they were married in 1956. Mary moved to Keith's hometown of Flint and worked as a music teacher in the Flint Public Schools. Fortuitously, two of Mary's distinguished teachers from Westminster Choir College were organizing a choral program at Flint's First Presbyterian Church. Mary sang and soloed with the adult choir, and after several years, when her daughter Janet turned 4 years old, built a youth choir program. She was seen regularly on

Christmas Eve and the Spring concerts at Whiting Auditorium in her red robe conducting the children (who she made sure sang in excellent tune).

Mary was an active member of the Junior League of Flint, the St Cecelia Society, the Flint Dancing Club, and the Flint Institute of Music, volunteering and working to raise scholarship funds for students and local performing arts institutions. She continued her vocal music training with Eugene Bossart at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor. She was an active performer in recitals and musical programs, and played a memorable role in a production of the Bremen Town Musicians.

Summers were spent in northern Michigan, on the east shore of Duck Lake, where her grandfather Earl built one of the first cottages. Swimming, boating, and partying with friends and family, Mary was known to keep wine cooled in the deck-side creek. Just across the lake, Interlochen Center for the Arts concerts by Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, Count Basie, Van Cliburn, Yo-Yo Ma, and Willie Nelson; the Shakespeare plays, and the Gilbert and Sullivan musicals kept the standard of culture high, even in the woods. She liked to buy tickets for anyone who wanted to go. Mary and Keith were President's Club members at Interlochen, and Mary volunteered at their college fairs to recruit Interlochen graduates to attend Westminster.

She and Keith moved to Duck Lake in the early 1990s and began an almost new life, where they enjoyed watching the birds and the changing seasons, helping run the Agosa Dance Club of Traverse City, supporting the Traverse Symphony Orchestra, taking their boat on trips around the Great Lakes, and getting outside for winter sports of cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing. Mary was an avid reader, loving biographies, but also mysteries, making her way through everything Agatha Christie wrote. Beginning with the BBC mini-series of *Pride and Prejudice* (often watched again and again into the wee morning hours with Janet and Keith), Mary became enthralled with Jane Austen's novels and also that author's life, making Mary's trips to Bath, London, and Lyme Regis while visiting England even more meaningful.

Mary loved singing and dancing, and she loved talking to new people and making new friends. Mary loved to travel, and her journeys with Keith often took them to visit Janet wherever she might be studying or working - Greece, Italy, Sweden, and England - as they made their way to Africa and throughout Europe. One monumental four-month trip took them from Australia, New Zealand, and Tanzania through Thailand, China, Japan, and the Philippines, with beautiful nights spent walking around Singapore and Hong Kong. Mary's favorite city was Vienna, where she and Keith spent weeks going to nightly concerts and opera, walking through the gardens, and enjoying the jubilant strains of musician Johann

Strauss. Her favorite television show was the Vienna New Year's Concert broadcast from the concert hall of Vienna's Musikverein. She loved classic movies - as long as they weren't too sad - and made the pilgrimage to see White Christmas when it was shown on the big screen at the State Theatre in Traverse City in recent years, as well as programs at the Traverse City Film Festival. She also loved the Harry Potter books, and celebrated several "Harry and Mary" birthday parties.

After a fall that injured her brain in 2015, Mary chose to move into Evergreen Cottage in the Village of Grand Traverse Commons, making new friends, enjoying concerts on the lawn, sitting on the cottage porch in the rocking chairs or over at the patio at Left Foot Charley Winery with a glass of Riesling, and keeping up a busy schedule of exercise, Feldenkrais, speech classes, even wading in Lake Michigan; and after aphasia stole her ability to speak, working with therapy horses and doing Rolfing. She also adopted a 4-year-old kitty she named Daisy who was her constant cuddling and sleeping companion. She continued to visit her house on Duck Lake, and her two cats who lived there, often spending summer days resting in the screen house and doing holiday overnights. She was helped in all this by the most wonderful, attentive, and generous team of caregivers.

Mary is survived by her husband Keith of Duck Lake, and daughter Janet, and Janet's partner Jonathan Schroeder, of Rochester, New York; her brother Ed of Duck Lake, and sister Janet of Okemos; and her beloved nieces and nephews and their children. She was preceded in death by her father Harley, her mother Fae, and her brother Bill.

In honor of her angel animal companion Daisy, donations could be made to the Charlevoix Area Humane Society.

Everyone is invited to bring a picture of Mary to display on a provided poster board, or write down a memory to leave in a basket, at the funeral home.

A visitation will be held on Thursday, April 27, 2017 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home. A funeral service will be held on Friday, April 28, 2017 at 11 a.m. at the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home, with visitation beginning at 10 a.m.

Events

APR 27 **Visitation for friends and family** 05:00PM - 08:00PM

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Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home

305 Sixth St, Traverse City, MI, US, 49684

APR 28 **Visitation for friends and family** 10:00AM - 11:00AM

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APR 28 **Funeral Service** 11:00AM

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Comments



“ Dear Keith and Janet,
I saw the article and beautiful picture of Mary in the Leelenau paper, sent to me by a dear childhood friend from Flint, Jennifer McLogan. It brought back memories of the wonderful times we had together at First Presbyterian Church. Mom and Mary were great friends, often singing together and enjoying all of the music and culture in Flint. Dad was so fond of you all as well. I enjoyed learning more about Mary from the article, and I so admire her accomplishments, her generosity, and her love of life. I have kept up with your family through Jean Craig Flynn (Auntie Jean). Please accept my condolences from my whole family. Dad died in 2015 and Mom, who has dementia, doesn't realize he is gone. Mom is otherwise healthy and happy, living in Florida and Petoskey with full time care and lots of family visits. She thinks she is in her twenties and is always excited about preparing a musical program with Mary, Jean, Charlie and Bill Renneckar. I'm in California and will be coming to Michigan this summer. Maybe Auntie Jean and I could come visit Keith.
With love, Deedee Timyan Pichard, daughter of Sue and Bob Timyan

Deedee Pichard - April 30, 2017 at 08:19 AM



“ Dear Mr. Borgerson, Janet and Jonathan,
We are so sorry for your loss. Tim and I saw the obituary in the Flint Journal last night and we reminisced about Mrs. Borgerson and all the fun times at First Presbyterian and our childhood choir. Mrs. Borgerson was such a huge part of that. We opened a bottle of wine and toasted to the wonderful lady that she was. She lived such a unique and accomplished life and we respected her and are so glad we can say that we knew her.
With Sympathy,
Martha Wentworth Sanford and Tim Sanford

Martha Sanford - April 27, 2017 at 01:22 PM



“ Both my husband and I have very fond memories of "Mrs. Borgerson" from her days at Garfield Elementary in Flint. She is one of those rare teachers from one's past that has been remembered, and spoken of, very often throughout our adult years. The little boys all had a crush on her, because she was so very beautiful, and the little girls loved her, because she was always so kind and sweet. It was wonderful to learn more of her and her life, and to flesh out the person we only knew as the "pretty teacher that always smiled" and was nice to all of us. Seeing her photo, with that wonderful smile again shining on us, was a joy amidst the sorrow. Our sincerest condolences.

The Draheim and Kowalski Families

Kristine Draheim Kowalski - April 23, 2017 at 04:57 PM



“ I am the granddaughter of Frank S. Hardy...founder of the Vernon State Bank. I have fond memories of your family and Mary. Especially during the Cherry Festival Parade sitting on your lawn on Front Street. I remember how beautiful Mary was inside and out.

So very sorry for your loss. Anne Lawford Krawczak

Anne Lawford Krawczak - April 23, 2017 at 12:36 PM