



Phyllis Ann Garn

October 4, 1922 - September 29, 2020

Phyllis Ann Garn, wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother took her final step in a ninety-seven-year journey on September 29, 2020.

Born Phyllis Ann Bauer on Oct. 4, 1922, in Newport News, Va., to Ralph Lessing Bauer and Eva Rosser Bauer. Starting at age five she moved with her parents and sisters Martha (Tavener) and Mary (Hazelton) to Ann Arbor, then to Omena (1933) and finally to Traverse City. Her father Ralph Bauer (who had graduated from Traverse City High School as valedictorian) was Traverse City's first registered architect. Her mother Eva, whose family came originally from Wales by way of Canada was born in Traverse City in 1893 attended the Cincinnati School of Music, taught music and was known for her beautiful voice. As a girl, Phyllis loved playing the violin and took her first class from Dr. Joseph Maddy (founder of the National Music Camp at Interlochen) by radio in a group class he started from Ann Arbor.

She was a 1940 graduate of Traverse City High School. She attended the University of Michigan for two years before enlisting in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) which became the Women's Air Corp (WAC) during World War II. During her service she attained the rank of sergeant while stationed in Atlantic City, Va. and then Louisville, Ky. As part of the Traverse City contingent of veterans who traveled to Washington D.C. in 2004 to dedicate the National WWII Memorial, she was delighted to see women recognized for their service.

She married Rex Marshall Garn on September 7, 1945 in Traverse City at Central United Methodist Church when he was home on leave from service in the Army paratroopers during World War II. At the time of their betrothal Phyllis, a corporal, out-ranked Rex, who had recently been busted back to private. Shortly thereafter they both left the military and returned to Traverse City.

In 1954 Phyllis and Rex purchased an old farmstead on Beitner Road and established Rex Ranch, a horseback riding and boarding stable. A good many children of the area

remember spending summer mornings and afternoons riding swimming and playing with the many ranch animals and pets.

Every summer weekday morning Phyllis would drive the Rex Ranch van into Traverse City picking up eager, young horseback riders with over 100 kids per year spending their summer mornings learning to ride under Rex's instruction. The Ranch had over 50 horses for riding and boarded another 50 horses for local riding fans.

In 1963, Rex & Phyllis along with fellow horse fanciers Tony and Sally Wilhelm, Fitch and Louise Williams (of Traverse City) and Jim Hardy (of Mio, Michigan) began planning a ride to cross the state on horseback. The 220-mile trail from Empire to Tawas City was dedicated as the Michigan Riding and hiking Trail by Governor George Romney in 1964. For the next 20 years Phyllis and Rex would both be active developing and supporting the works and rides of the MTRA. In 2013 Phyllis was recognized, at the 50th anniversary of the Michigan Trail Riders Association, as the surviving member of the founding group, for work as secretary in the association's early years, and for many years making the small guidepost replicas riders received for completing the cross-state trail.

During those ranch years Phyllis also worked as an assistant to Dr. Mark Osterlin, as school secretary at Sabin School secretary, at the Grand Traverse Planning Commission, at the Traverse City YMCA, and finally writing advertising copy for Milliken's department store where she put words to the beautiful illustrations of Betty Andrus. Phyllis, having completed two and a half years at the University of Michigan before the war, continued taking courses towards her Bachelor's Degree through extension courses from Northwestern Michigan College and Central Michigan University – but never applied for her degree.

Phyllis joined Central United Methodist Church in 1938. Over the years she served on numerous committees over the years including secretary of the church council, choir member, Sunday school teacher, nominations, archives, trustee committees and volunteer office coordinator. She was a fixture as a greeter, usher, at fund raising walks and chair of the annual rummage Bazar (twice) and chair of the talent dinner. In 1997 she has honored as the CUMC Woman of the Year. In addition to her church service she was a Traverse City Junior High PTSO volunteer and served as president in 1972 and 1973. Phyllis was also familiar to many as a docent at the Heritage Museum and the Dennon Museum.

Memorable throughout these years were the annual New Year's Eve bonfire celebrations convened by the Garn's and Tony and Sally Wilhelm. Great outdoor excursions that lit up the winter sky and many of the attendees.

After the passing of her beloved husband Rex in 1976, she continued to spend many winters cross-country skiing and summers enjoying the view from “Garn Mountain” near the mouth of the Hoosier Valley and overlooking the Boardman Valley. Moving into Slabtown in 1996 she enjoyed walking up Wayne Hill twice a day with her sister Marty Tavener as well as gardening, sewing, camping, rug hooking, and frequent outings to Interlochen for concerts and plays. In her Five Wishes document Phyllis let us all know, “I loved my family, friends and church and thought the Grand Traverse area the perfect place to live. Life was interesting from beginning to end. I hope God found some of it to be in his service.”

Phyllis was predeceased by her parents, Ralph and Eva Bauer; husband Rex Garn; and sister Martha (Caryl) Tavener, and sister Mary (Paul) Hazelton. She is survived by her children Michael (Dawn) Garn of Kennesaw, Ga., Patricia Jane Heineman of Orlando, Fl., and Clifford “Jack” Swanson of Traverse City. Her grandchildren are Zoe Garn, Allison Remp and Aron Heineman (deceased), Clifford Rex Swanson, Emma Jack Swanson and Jena Boote; and great-grandchildren Charles A.D. Heineman, Shyanne Heineman, Davian Remp, Jackson Remp, Tristian Boote and Anthony Swanson.

A memorial service will be held at a later date and she will be laid to rest in Traverse City’s Oakwood Cemetery. Memorial contributions may be directed to Central United Methodist Church of Traverse City.

You may visit Lois’ tribute page at www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com

Comments



“ rest in paradise sweet heart love u always glad i was one of your care givers. i always told u to stay strong n comfortable n you did just that. never will be tne dame without you. you always made me laugh. just know i love u n haven gained a previous angel love your caregiver june limon

june - October 05, 2020 at 08:18 PM



“ What great memories I have of Phyllis from trail rides, haying and weekly dinners which our little “horse group” enjoyed all year around. She’s a gal you never forget. I’m so glad she was a part of my life Jeanie Fleetwood

Jeanie Fleetwood - October 02, 2020 at 11:28 PM



“ Rest In Peace Phyllis; you will be missed.
Racine Rasmussen

Racine Rasmussen - October 02, 2020 at 04:47 PM



“ I was part of the group that was picked up by the Rex ranch bus at central grade school. Great memories, riding, caring for and about animals, swimming in the pond after riding. Such great memories from super fine people. Prayers for the family

Gary Joslin - October 02, 2020 at 07:05 AM



“ Alot of great memories riding and camping with her. MTRA #275. She was a great one for sure. Mary (Beck) Korson.

mary korson - October 01, 2020 at 12:54 PM



“ My sister Cindy and I were some of the lucky ones who were picked up at a party store at Garfield and eighth by Mrs. Garn in her van. She would take us to Rex Ranch and we would trail ride and just hang around the ranch for hours. Thank you Mrs. Garn for making our great childhood memories possible.

Brenda Brown Whikers

Brenda Brown Whikers - October 01, 2020 at 10:33 AM



“ Phyllis was a force to reckon with. I worked with her and Betty at Milliken's in the advertising department, delightful twosome to work with. I also was recruited by her to work in the church office many years ago. Loved and respected Phyllis.

Luana Dueweke - October 01, 2020 at 09:07 AM



“ Phyllis was a treasure! I had the great honor to know her at church and spend time with her at Boardman Glens. She enriched my life and she did for many. She will be dearly missed. God bless her. Sandy O'Niel

Sandra O'Niel - October 01, 2020 at 08:14 AM



“ To Phyllis- a strong, wise, and vibrant lady. I admired you, very much.

Muriel Peavler - October 01, 2020 at 12:28 PM



“ A sweet, dear lady. Loved visiting with her at Boardman Glen's she had so many wonderful stories. Will miss our visits. Geri Torno

Geri Torno - October 01, 2020 at 02:59 PM