



Phyllis M. Wenzel

February 20, 1928 - June 3, 2016

Phyllis M. Wenzel, 88 of Crystal Falls, left this life on Friday, June 3, 2016.

She was born Feb. 20, 1928 in Ferndale, Michigan. Her father, Curtis Behnke, emigrated from Germany at the age of 14. In the U.S. he worked six days a week and took night classes five days a week -- Wednesday and Sunday were for Bible study and church services. He became a draftsman/designer at Chrysler Corporation. His dedication to education and hard work were cornerstones to his daughter's values.

Phyllis' mother, Thelma, the daughter of previously established Irish-English immigrants, inspired Phyllis' interest in sewing, cooking and decorating, and undoubtedly handed down her sense of humor. As others have said of Phyllis, she loved to laugh.

Phyllis' love of music was her own, though. Her father introduced a grand piano into the house when she was a child, and after a couple years of basic lessons, she was so engrossed by making music that her mother would have to scold her to stop practicing and go out to play.

After graduation from Lincoln High School, she earned a degree in piano performance from the University of Detroit's School of Music. She offered piano lessons from her family's home until her marriage to DNR wildlife

biologist Duaine Wenzel at age 28.

The couple had met as children while both families camped at Higgins Lake, and had a mutual interest in the outdoors: swimming, canoeing, skiing and skating. But when she heard that her fiance was going to be transferred from a temporary post in the lower peninsula to the U.P., the Detroit girl cried. She apparently pictured her destination as a barren wilderness, without comforts, commerce or even medical clinics.

Arriving in Crystal Falls in October 1958 during the full display of fall color, she fell in love with the area. She became a fixture on the ski hill weekday afternoons in the winter and on the shore of Fortune Lake in summer. She soon built up a thriving piano-teaching program and participated in the Crystal Falls Musicale and the Northland Chorus.

Phyllis retired from teaching when the couple's daughter Holly was born in 1967. She'd helped build the pair's cottage in the 1960s and was now called on to cope with moving into the family's home on Forest Avenue long before it was finished, cooking in an electric roaster and hanging fabric around the bathroom studs to bring the place up to residential code. Her camping experience definitely helped.

Like her own mother, Phyllis passed on her love for sewing, cooking and music to her daughter. She also ensured the family had a church affiliation -- in earlier years First Baptist in Iron River, then Faith Baptist in Crystal Falls and later Faith Fellowship.

Facing Duaine's kidney failure and her own illnesses made Phyllis' faith crucial to her. And as both became more frail, their Christian faith was truly a lifeline.

The friends who saw the couple through the struggles of their later years -- many of whom appeared on the scene just at the time of need -- were themselves evidence of blessings and care.

Phyllis' lifelong battle with scoliosis finally took her strength and mobility, and she moved to the Iron County Medical Care Facility in 2011. There, she made a whole new flock of friends among the caring staff, with her sense of humor and interest in others drawing them to her room on each shift.

Having lost Duaine in May, 2014, after 56 years of marriage, she still persevered, making new friends at the home and witnessing to them from her bed. She died June 3 at Marquette General Hospital after a few days' struggle with a stroke that affected her swallowing and left her with aspiration pneumonia. Her daughter Holly was with her.

A visitation will be held on Saturday, August 13 from 10:00 am to 11:00 at the Nash Funeral Home in Crystal falls. A memorial service will follow at 11 a.m. at the Funeral Home, 104 N 3rd St, Crystal Falls, with a luncheon to follow at Faith Fellowship Church, 1314 US Hwy 2, Crystal Falls.

She is survived by her daughter, Holly (Randal) Swanson; brother in-law, Gail (Gala) Wenzel and their children Gary (Tracie) and Gayl (Rafer) Yocom and families as well as nephew Gary (Linda) Kilduff and great-niece Alison.

Condolences may be expressed to the family of Phyllis M. Wenzel online at www.nashfuneralhome.net

The family has entrusted the Nash Funeral Home of Crystal Falls with the funeral arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Evergreen Memorial Cemetery

311 Logan St.
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 13. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Nash Funeral Home
104 North Third St.
Crystal Falls, MI 49920

Celebration of Life

AUG 13. 11:00 AM (CT)

Nash Funeral Home
104 N. Third St.
Crystal Falls

Tribute Wall

MH

“ My deepest sympathy goes out to you . Your mom taught me and my two sisters piano lessons for many years. I will always remember that bear carpet under the piano and the spring piano recitals she held in their home. She was a very talented lady and an accomplished pianist. I'm sure you miss her deeply. Marcia Heron (Ellingboe)

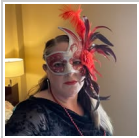
Marcia Heron - August 12, 2016 at 04:14 PM

RF

“ Richard and Roberta Swanson and Family purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Phyllis M. Wenzel.



Richard and Roberta Swanson and Family - August 09, 2016 at 05:18 PM



“ I will miss our little visits Philly. Sad to hear of your passing. I am glad you had such a wonderful daughter to look after you. God bless.



Laura Lee - June 07, 2016 at 06:43 PM