

# Dorothy Comstock Ray

August 26, 1917 - September 29, 2015



## *Dorothy's Life Story*

All who knew Dorothy Comstock Ray would agree that she brought the world around her to life. She was vibrant and fun-loving with a warm and inviting personality that drew others near. It was easy to see that Dorothy treasured her family, and she was thrilled beyond measure to witness her family tree blossom to include the grandchildren and great-grandchildren who made her so very proud. Known for her skills as a hostess, all were welcome in her home and in her heart, and she lived to nurture and care for others. Although Dorothy will be deeply missed, she leaves behind a priceless collection of memories that her loved ones will forever cherish.

Nearly a century has passed since the WWI drew America in. It was in 1917 that we engaged in the fight for the preservation of the freedoms that we still enjoy after repeated acts of hostility in the Pacific couldn't go unanswered despite hopes of remaining neutral. It was also in 1917 that Charles O. and Lillian Carolyn (Swanson) Peterson were eagerly awaiting for the birth of their twin newborns as the heat of the summer held the city of Galesburg, Illinois, firmly in its grip. The big day finally arrived on August 26th when the baby girl they named Dorothy Elizabeth made her arrival alongside her sister, Frances. Galesburg was a small farming and railroad town with the train route between Chicago and Los Angeles coming just to the North of their farm. Dorothy's parents were dairy farmers who owned and operated Peterson Dairy. She was 100% Swedish as her grandmother, Anna Lisa Nilsson, left Sweden bound for the United States as a young girl. Anna also married another Swede.

In many ways, Dorothy was a young girl of her generation. She was raised in a very close Swedish family with several aunts, uncles, and cousins nearby. They held tightly to their Swedish traditions and had family reunions at Lincoln Park in Galesburg every summer. Their entire family attended the Swedish Lutheran Church in Galesburg. While growing up, Dorothy enjoyed living on the family farm and taking on some farm chores like milking cows—especially Topsy, her favorite cow. She also helped out with plowing the fields using mules. In addition, Dorothy attended a one-room schoolhouse in the country. She also enjoyed working at her Uncle Albert's Softball Field at Lincoln Park in Galesburg, taking admission fees from patrons while also holding down her studies in high school. It was quite an experience for Dorothy and her sister when they went from a one-room schoolhouse to a bustling public high school. She was always a flurry of activity as she played both the violin and piano, participated in softball, and attended the Swedish Lutheran Church. After graduating from Galesburg High School in 1935, Dorothy attended Knox College, Western Illinois State Teacher's College, and Western Michigan University, earning her bachelor's and master's degree.





New and exciting changes were in store for Dorothy when she met the young man of her dreams. His name was Richard Comstock, and they met at a dance while she was attending Western Illinois Teacher's College when the college put on a dance for the soldiers who were stationed at a nearby base. Sparks flew right from the start, and they soon found themselves deeply in love. With a desire to establish a life together, the sweethearts were married in 1943. Together Dorothy and Richard were blessed to become parents to three amazing children, Nancy, Richard "Rick," and Janice. She loved camping, and some of their best family memories were made camping out West. Two of their favorite trips were to Yellowstone National Park and also taking Route 66 to California and then back through the Rocky Mountains. The Comstock family also spent time during the summers closer to home, camping and fishing throughout Michigan.



In addition to caring for her family, Dorothy kept busy in numerous other ways. She spent 33 years working as a teacher, primarily as a kindergarten teacher for Kalamazoo Public Schools. An active part of her community, Dorothy held longtime memberships in various organizations, spending countless hours volunteering for worthy causes. Her memberships included: Kalamazoo Association of Retired School Personnel, VASA Lodge #661, American Association of University Women, Delta Chapter—Alpha Beta Epsilon sorority where she served as the president at one time, the Kalamazoo Rose Society where she was also president at one time, First United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill United Methodist Church, Meals On Wheels, Portage Senior Center and the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra League. Dorothy served as chairman of the Women's Division of the Kalamazoo Chamber of Commerce, Dorothy was in charge of the Sister City Scrapbook Project between Kalamazoo and Numazu, Japan. Around home she enjoyed raising roses and rose bushes, and at one she time had over three hundred roses and rose bushes in her home garden. Dorothy's roses were absolutely beautiful as they won many blue ribbons with entries into rose shows. She also brought roses to nursing homes and the homebound throughout Kalamazoo and Portage.



As the years went by, Dorothy continued fully embracing the days she was given. After retiring in 1979, she and Richard spent much of their time traveling including a trip to Hawaii. They also spent their winters in Florida. Dorothy was







deeply saddened with Richard's death in 1981, but she continued to delight in her family as she was overjoyed to become a grandmother and a great-grandmother later in life. She also remained active during her retirement years and participated in numerous local race walking events beginning at the age of 68 and continuing until she was 88. Dorothy was extremely proud of winning more than 160 medals and ribbons at the Michigan Senior Olympics and representing Michigan at the National Senior Games. In fact, many of her winning efforts earned in 2002 at the age of 85 still stand as records for her age category! She spent many of her sunset years with David Ray whom she met at her 50th class reunion in Galesburg, Illinois. They were married in 1985. Another milestone in Dorothy's life was a trip to Sweden when she met her relatives and toured the ancestry home and land.

Described as loving, compassionate, and selfless, Dorothy Comstock Ray was a blessing to everyone she met. She was an amazing hostess who loved entertaining people and showering them with an endless variety of food as an outpouring of her generous heart. She was a fierce competitor who always gave everything her all while fully embracing the challenges that came her way. Dorothy will never be forgotten.

Dorothy Comstock Ray passed away on Tuesday, September 29, 2015. Dorothy's family includes her three children, Nancy (Terrence) Willyard, Richard (Kay) Comstock, and Janice (John) Folk; eight grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren; sister-in-law, Thelma (Jack) Blackney; and several nieces and nephews. Dorothy was preceded in death by her parents; first husband, Richard Comstock; second husband, David Ray; and her twin sister, Francis (Peterson) Shay. A private service is planned for immediate family with burial Mt. Everest Memorial Park, Kalamazoo, Michigan. Please visit [www.lifestorynet.com](http://www.lifestorynet.com) where you can sign her guestbook, read her life story, share a memory and/or photo. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to Michigan Senior Olympics, 650 Letica Drive, Rochester, Michigan 48307. The family is being assisted by the Life Story Funeral Home, 5975 Lovers Lane, Portage (269-344-5600).



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