

4M '44

Dorothy Rodgers Werk (1928 - 2017)



Werk

Dorothy Rodgers Werk, a devoted and loving wife, sister, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, died on July 8, 2017 at her home in Wilmington, North Carolina. She was 88.

There are no words to adequately describe her beauty, both inside and out; her caring and selfless nature; the strength of her spirit; and the love she bestowed on her family and friends.

Dorothy, which in Greek means Gift of God, was born November 28, 1928 in Clarksdale, Mississippi to Mark Childress Rodgers and Mary Vincent Rodgers. She is preceded in death by her husband of 64 years, Emile Eugene Werk, Jr., MD, who died July 17, 2016; and her only sibling, sister, Childress Rodgers of Cincinnati, Ohio, who died May 20, 2016.

Dorothy's father, a cotton farmer, died when she was a year old. When Dorothy was six, she and her mother and sister moved from Clarksdale to Cincinnati, where her mother remarried—to Lawrence R. Smith, the son of Judge Rufus Biggs Smith and Edith Harrison Smith of Cincinnati. Like her sister, Dorothy adored horses, ponies and other animals and she was surrounded by them on her stepfather's 20-acre property in the village of Indian Hill outside Greater Cincinnati.

She graduated from the Hillsdale School, which is now part of The Seven Hills School in Cincinnati. After attending Bennett College in Millbrook, New York, she returned to Cincinnati, where she married Dr. Werk, the son of Emile E. and Viola Werk of Cincinnati, on July 3, 1952. The Werk family owned and operated several prominent businesses in Cincinnati, including M. Werk & Co., the oldest soap and candle business in the city.

In 1972, Emile and Dorothy moved their family to Wilmington as Dr. Werk was recruited by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Medicine to serve as Chief of University of North Carolina Medical Service at New Hanover Memorial Hospital (now New Hanover Regional Medical Center), and to establish a medical resident training program through the state's newly formed Area Health Education Center (AHEC) program.

Family was at the center of Dorothy's life. She cherished every opportunity - from holidays to impromptu get-togethers - to celebrate the joy of family warmth, relationships and laughter. She defined the essence of love and taught - in her every day words and actions - the importance and value of expressing it.

Her many wonderful and long-time friends are testament to her loving, loyal and supportive qualities. She treated everyone with grace, humanity and respect.

Dorothy was an accomplished athlete. She won a women's golf club championship at the Cape Fear Country Club in Wilmington and made three hole in ones over the length of her playing days. In her younger years, she excelled in horseback riding, badminton and field hockey. She loved music, dancing and tending to her beautiful yard of flowering bushes and plants as well as her garden of seasonal vegetables.

She also shared her husband's passion of sports fishing. The couple spent many weekends on their Egg Harbor, named Freedom, catching King Mackerel in the waters off of Wrightsville Beach.

Her giving and generous character was evident through her: years working as a hospital and mental health volunteer; involvement with the Junior League, the Colonial Dames and the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society; and support of numerous charities.

She is survived by: sons, David Michael Werk of Cary, NC (wife, Cheyenne, and daughter, Ting, and grandchild, Jean-Michel and wife, Megan, and grandchild, Stephan), Stephen Rodgers Werk of Chapel Hill, NC (wife, Lynn, and grandchildren, Emily and Caroline), and Thomas Alan Werk of Raleigh, NC (wife, Paula, and grandchildren, Allison and Collins); daughter, Susan Marie Werk of Wilmington (grandchild, Lauren, and husband, Patrick Culton; and grandchild, Jenna); and two great-grandchildren (Mariella and Emilia).

The Werk family expresses its deepest thanks and appreciation to Lower Cape Fear Hospice, and for the love and devoted care provided by Dorothy's caregivers, which include: Ginger Desfonds, Ramona H. Jones, Theresa Carr and Sharon Simental.

A special thanks of appreciation to Dr. James McCabe, Dr. Jonathan Hines, Dr. Kevin O'Neil and the many other physicians and nurses at New Hanover Regional Medical Center. Gifts in Dorothy's memory and in lieu of flowers may be made to the American Diabetes Association, Lower Cape Fear Hospice or a charity of one's choice.

A Memorial Service will be held at 2:00 pm Saturday, July 15, 2017 at St. James Episcopal Church in Wilmington. A reception will follow at the church. Burial will take place at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati.

Condolences to the family at www.andrewsmortuary.com

Andrews Market Street Chapel

Funeral Home

Andrews Mortuary & Crematory - Market Street Chapel
1617 MARKET ST Wilmington, NC 28401
910-762-7788

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