



## Blanche Nellie McCumber

June 29, 1927 - January 21, 2010

HER LIFE STORY: Blanche McCumber was a selfless woman, always giving and then giving some more. She was completely dedicated to her family and took pride in making her house a home - a home where all were welcome, especially her grandchildren. Known as “Granny” to her grandchildren, Blanche couldn’t help but spoil them a little, or a lot! She didn’t need a fancy home, flashy cars, or a wealth of material possessions to make her happy, rather Blanche found true joy in the love shared among her family. She leaves behind lessons in faith, love, and true sacrifice that will be her lasting legacy.

The 1920s are often referred to as the “Roaring Twenties” because it was during this decade that people were making the most of the prosperous times by participating in dance marathons, throwing elaborate parties, and going places such as baseball games or the movies. It was during this time that William and Rose (Stafford) Shafer welcomed the birth of their daughter, Blanche, on June 29, 1927. Blanche was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan, the sixth of nine children. Her father worked in the local paper mill, but during the early thirties moved his family to Summit Township in Mason County where his family operated a fruit farm. One of Blanche’s chores on the farm was to watch over the cattle grazing in the fields. She and her brother Clarence would tie bells around the cows’ necks. When they got too caught up in their playing and forgot all about keeping an eye on the cows, the bells would make it easier for them to find. Blanche attended Fairview School on the shoreline of Lake Michigan. It was quite a distance from their farm, but she and her

siblings walked through the woods along the “school path” they created. Recess was often spent along the shoreline, even in the winter months. Blanche later attended and graduated from Ludington High School. After graduation, Blanche found work at Star Watchcase in Ludington. During this time, she was introduced to the man with whom she would live a lasting love story. His name was John A. McCumber and they met through mutual friends. This group of friends often went ice fishing and tobogganing in the winter, and frequented the beach and local dances during the summer. There was an attraction between Blanche and John that neither could deny, and after dating for a time, they were married on October 16, 1948, at St. Simon Catholic Church in Ludington. Nothing could have thrilled Blanche more than being blessed to become a mother. She and John welcomed five children who were born one right after the other into their hearts and home: Janet, Diane, Tim, Tom, and Mary Ann. Then eight years later, Todd and Jon joined their family and were often referred to as the “little boys” while they in turn called their older siblings the “fab five.” Blanche absolutely loved being a mom and always made time for her children even though she was certainly busy herself. She was a very hard worker, self sufficient, and never complained about anything. Blanche still helped out on her parents’ farm picking cherries right alongside her children – even while she was pregnant. She could often be heard saying, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way,” or at times, “Get up and get busy, and it will make you feel better.” She was always home when her children returned from school, and they were usually welcomed home by the smell of clean laundry and freshly baked cookies. There were countless other ways in which Blanche was such an extraordinary mother. She was a talented seamstress who sewed many of her children’s clothes including embroidered Easter dresses, flannel pajamas for everyone each Christmas, and Halloween costumes as well. Blanche canned many fruits and vegetables from their garden, helped butcher their own cattle, and could repair anything in their home. Although caring for her family was her main focus, there were other interests Blanche enjoyed. She displayed an example of service to her

children by serving on the Riverton Township Election Board for many years, and looked forward to bowling on Thursday nights with her friend Betty VanDyke, which meant that sloppy joes and baked beans were on the menu. She liked crafting, flower gardening, and long hikes in the woods, and was always active whether she was hiking, cross-country skiing, or having adventures with her family. When she was 66, Blanche took her children and grandchildren on her "Route 66" tour at the family farm. As she blazed along the trail in the woods, her family struggled to keep up with her! Blanche and John cherished the time they spent at their get-away cabin built on the Sauble River. She found such peace and solitude while sitting on the deck overlooking the river, and she kept many of her "treasures" there. Later in life, Blanche continued to enjoy each moment. She often traveled with her sister Emma after the kids were out of school, visiting several landmarks throughout the United States. Blanche took a trip to Ireland with her daughters and brother Tom in celebration of her 80th birthday. This was her "bucket list" trip, and she was so excited to go that she told everyone she knew about it. Blanche McCumber considered it pure joy to care for others. She was dedicated to her faith and devoted to her family – her life a living example of what being a mother and grandmother is truly meant to be. Blanche's family will remember her for her cookie jar, sneaking treats to her great-grandchildren, and her zest for life, but all who knew her will remember her for her tender heart. Blanche McCumber passed away peacefully on Thursday, January 21, 2010 following a brief struggle with cancer. She was preceded in death by her husband of 61 years John on December 17, 2009, and her sister and brothers Mary Bennett, Larry, Clarence, and Harry Shafer. Blanche will be remembered with pride and great love by her children: Janet (Douglas) Barth of Clarksville, MD, Diane (Jeff) Day of Indianapolis, IN, Tim McCumber of Traverse City, Tom (Kathy) McCumber of Ada, MaryAnn (Steve) Nielsen of Scottville, Todd (Robyn) McCumber of Custer and Jon (Pam) McCumber of Grand Rapids; eleven grandchildren Steven (Rebecca) Barth of Bel Air, MD,

Joanna Barth of Clarksville, MD, Tim (Kelly) Day of Shelby Township, Katie Day of Toledo, OH, David and Laura McCumber of Ada, Kari Nielsen and Tessie (Josh) Henry all of Scottville, Stephanie Nielsen of Grand Rapids, Jenni (Travis) Altman of Ludington and Joe McCumber of Custer, great grandchildren Ian Barth and Chase and Mack Henry; brothers and sisters Emma Van Horn of Grand Rapids, Phyllis Petersen and Art (Donna) Shafer of Ludington and Tom Shafer of Scottville.