



Jeanne Elaine Merrill

May 1, 1924 - March 5, 2008

Jeanne Elaine Merrill was a vigorous, capable and caring woman who centered her world around her husband and children. Yet her energy for life couldn't help but spill over to her friends and neighbors. She was proud of her family, her community and all of their accomplishments. The love and attention she extended to others was returned to her in the support and affection of those she held dear. Jeanne was born to Frank Xavier and Alta Mabel (Merritt) Claveau on May 1, 1924 in Scottville, Michigan. At the time, America was recovering from the First World War and straining to rebuild its economy. The nation's can-do spirit was reflected in Charles Lindbergh's solo flight across the ocean, Henry Ford's mass production of the automobile, and the Suffrage Movement that won women the right to vote. The Claveau's were part of that drive to make life good for Jeanne and her younger brother Frank Jr., better known as "Butch." The family made their home on Thomas Street, and Jeanne grew up having fun (like playing tennis) as well as learning to take responsibility. Her father operated the Confectioners Store in downtown Scottville, and she often helped out at the store, in addition to picking cherries in a local orchard, and working at the Scottville Creamery. When she graduated from Scottville High School in 1942, Jeanne was eager to take on the challenges that awaited her. Jeanne enrolled in the University of Michigan Nursing School and was in the program for 18 months, before returning home to Scottville. Many of her fellow classmates, like Harold Merrill, were called to serve their country during World War II. When Harold returned home from the

war, the two of them happened to bump into each other at Schoenberger's Grocery Store. They greeted each other with a smile and a handshake and that's all it took. Jeanne was smitten! The loving couple married on March 22, 1947 in Ludington. A happy consequence of their wedding day was that their best friends and attendants, Lois Chadwick and George Hankwitz, eventually married. Over the years, the two couples enjoyed a fun-filled, enduring friendship. Soon after they were married, Jeanne and Harold were expecting their first child, but sadly, their son Lloyd Robert died at birth. Graciously, they were blessed with two more children, Rodney and Holly. The family home that was built by Harold's father on Fourth Street in Scottville was filled with joy, and Jeanne and Harold never had a reason to live anywhere else. Harold and Jeanne supported their family through his enterprising spirit and her precise ways. He operated a trucking business with his brother Ron, fittingly called Merrill Brothers. Then he went to work for Wallace Electric and became a partner there. After a time, Harold purchased Wallace and Merrill Electric outright and called the business Merrill Electric. The company did contract work, particularly for airports all around Michigan, installing runway lighting. Jeanne was bookkeeper for the business and worked her perfectionist magic on the books from a cubicle in the basement of their home. Being at home meant Jeanne was there for the children. They were often entertained by their mother playing the piano and singing for them when Harold was away for his job. She was particularly versed in the music of the 1940s, and her playfulness only added to her role as mother, bookkeeper and homemaker. It was a matter of pride for Jeanne to handle all the cooking, cleaning and caring for kids while keeping the business running smoothly. Always attentive to detail, Jeanne insisted that the family was well dressed, meaning no jeans. She was an excellent cook, whether fixing meat and potatoes or baking pies, but casseroles were never on the menu. On the rare occasion that supper burned, it was because she had become engrossed in watching birds from her kitchen window. Being a bird watcher and dog lover, Jeanne's delight for life was extended beyond her family. In addition to her family, Jeanne loved to

spend time with friends. She and Harold stayed very close with George and Lois Hankwitz and cousin Betty Blundell. Besides traveling to California and Arizona to visit family, Jeanne and Harold made their friends' homes a destination point, especially in Florida. However, they most often traveled in the off-season, or at least the opposite-season of high school sporting events. As much as they were fans of the University of Michigan, they were even bigger supporters of Mason County Central Schools. They traveled all over the state to support the athletic teams and all over the U.S. to support local fast pitch softball teams in tournaments. Occasionally, Jeanne rode the spectator bus and got to know the students even better. If a high school student went on to compete in college, they planned their travel around being able to support that athlete. Jeanne and Harold became beloved fans. A wrestling tournament was named in Harold's honor and, long after those years, Jeanne received notes from students and athletes whom they had supported. Jeanne was also invested in her town. She took pride in Mason County and Scottville, and whenever one of their citizens was in the news, she clipped the article and saved it. As a previous member of Scottville United Methodist Church for many years, she got to know a lot of people. Though a somewhat private person, Jeanne was also very, very talkative and rarely had a short conversation with anyone. Checkout at the grocery store took 20 minutes or more, and if anyone was within earshot of her, Jeanne was sure to captivate them for a while. These friends and acquaintances will surely miss Jeanne, who died on Wednesday, March 5, 2008 at Memorial Medical Center in Ludington. Her family will forever remember her loving heart, caring ways and joyful spirit. Jeanne Elaine Merrill was preceded in death by her husband, Harold on October 9, 1996. Her beloved family includes her son Rodney and Jan Merrill of Scottville, her daughter Holly and Thomas Rowley of Grand Rapids; her grandsons Chris (LuAnn) Merrill of Lawrence, Kansas, and Steve Merrill of Ludington; three step-greatgrandchildren; her brother Frank "Butch" and Eloise Claveau, and her brother-in-law Ronald and Donna Merrill of

Scottville; two nephews and one niece.