



Dorothy June Gremmer "Sara"

December 29, 2017

The artist Dorothy June "Sara" Gremmer died on December 29th at St. Mary's Hospital in Mequon at the age of 102. Blessed with an indomitable spirit and great energy, she lived a life of engagement, discovery, and creativity. Her art career began in her late 30s when she attended a class at UW-Marquette. She jumped in with both feet. Her children soon were used to finding her sketching and studying when they came down to breakfast. The woman had energy! She regularly attended schools and workshops, read a steady stream of art books, and worked long hours in her home studio. And she managed to juggle it all successfully with a family and a whirlwind social life. Early on, she was influenced by the French Impressionists Monet and Matisse, especially their colors and subject matter. She was a prolific artist turning out oil, acrylic, and watercolor works continuously. Her determined personality showed through in her paintings. "I'm fast," she said. "I see something and I jump!" Once, minutes after removing loaves of bread from their baking tins to cool, she was busy painting the scene. After a few years, a sign went up in the front yard and her home became her gallery. That was the extent of her self-promotion. "I don't have time for that. I'd rather paint!" She benefited from word of mouth and was constantly readjusting her living room displays as new paintings were taken. To their delight, she gifted much of her work to family members and friends. When she was a child, her mother cooked for the cherry pickers in Door County. Along with her sisters, they lived in the Eagle Bluff Lighthouse, now a major attraction in Peninsula Park. She

adored Door County and spent much time there sketching and painting throughout her life. Her work was featured at the Cupola House in Egg Harbor for several years. Born Dorothy June Rabe on June 29th, 1915, to Edwin and Lucy (Cota) Rabe in the Oconto County Hospital, she spent her elementary years in Oconto where her parents owned a hotel and her father was, for a time, the Sheriff of Oconto County. The family then moved to Pound where her father owned and operated the Standard gas station. Dorothy graduated from Coleman High School and shortly thereafter met Henry "Red" Gremmer, who worked for the Wisconsin Highway Department on the project to upgrade Highway 141. They were married on September 8, 1934. After living in Madison, Green Bay, and Portage, they moved to Peshtigo in 1944 and soon took up residence at the corner of Ellis and McCagg Streets where they raised five children. Sara had a zest for all things beautiful. She sang and played piano publicly for a time and the stereo was always humming in her house with everything from Broadway to Classical to Ray Charles. She designed and sewed clothing and colorful hats for herself and others. Her house was also her canvas. The decor changed with the seasons and offered a joyous backdrop to many teas, lunches, workshops, and holiday gatherings she hosted over the years. Her circle of friends was large and she was a member of many art and service groups. Sara swam and exercised regularly at the Menominee YMCA until well into her 80s. She was a friend of Bill W. and practiced sobriety for over 60 years. Life was not a spectator sport for Sara. For decades, she enjoyed the artist's way, traveling with Henry, taking photos, sketching, and painting scenes. She painted the rocky seashore of Maine and the sandy beaches of Florida. Trips to Italy and Spain inspired her and she channeled the experience into her work. One of her favorite paintings was one she did of the rooftops of Florence. The architecture of Gaudi in Barcelona became an inspiration for some of her larger abstracts. She is known for her use of vibrant colors especially in her vast output of still lifes with flowers. Her landscapes captured beautifully the changing skies throughout Wisconsin's seasons. Anyone who owns a "Sara" can feel her spirit and sense the joy

she had in life. Her final years were spent in retirement living with her daughter, Lucy, in Milwaukee. She was preceded in death by her parents, her three brothers, Roy, Ray, and Gordon; her two sisters, Lucille and Sylvia; her husband, Henry, who died in 2001; and a son, Peter, who died as an infant. She is survived by her daughter, Lucy of Shorewood; and sons Tim (Mary) of Plover, John (Sue) of Winneconne, Dan (Winnie) of Chicago, and Paul of Milwaukee. She has ten grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. Her family wishes to thank the Hospice staff at St. Marys Hospital of Mequon. A service is planned for 11 A.M., February 17th, at Northshore Funeral Services, 3601 North Oakland, in Milwaukee. In remembrance of Sara, they ask that you donate to her preferred charity: Meta House, a treatment center for women and children with addictions; 2625 N. Weil St., Milwaukee, WI 53212. Service & Reception Info A service is planned for 11 A.M., February 17th, at Northshore Funeral Services, 3601 North Oakland, in Milwaukee. In remembrance of Sara, they ask that you donate to her preferred charity: Meta House, a treatment center for women and children with addictions; 2625 N. Weil St., Milwaukee, WI 53212.