

A tribute to Dorothy Redman Gehrman

By Wallace Berry

Dorothy Redman Gehrman slipped away from all of us this past December 10, 2006 to be with her Lord. Dorothy had lived a remarkable life to the age of 92, being born July 23, 1914 as the only child of John and Blanche Redman. Her parents were known even better as Captain John and Miss Blanche. Her father, previously widowed already had three daughters and a son by his previous marriage. He sailed his vessel named "The Robinson" for many long years along the waterways of the Machodoc Creek and Potomac River. Dorothy's mother was known as the Florence Nightingale of the community. When illness or care was needed the word went out "first call the doctor and then Miss Blanche." Both of Dorothy's parents were measured by their many good deeds. In fact, during the early 1920s when this church was having financial difficulties, the record shows that Captain John loaned the church \$500. It was never recorded that he was repaid—in all probability he asked for it not. Likewise Dorothy's grandparents, John Redman, Sr. and his wife, Margaret gave the land across our highway in 1856 as a location for the "meeting house" as it was called to have a permanent home here in the wilderness. It had moved from one location to another since its establishment in the year 1820.

From this meeting house our present church was built on this side of the highway in 1888. In 1936 Dorothy, the church and the community suffered instantly a tragic loss. Captain John and Miss Blanche were struck by an oil truck just this side of the present day Ninde Post Office on Route 205 as they were walking over to see one of Mr. Redman's daughters who had been feeling not too well. It was about 5:00 PM on the evening of December 18, 1936 when the news was flashed from door to door of this tragic event.

Now this past holiday season-2006-seventy years since that tragedy, the scene was so different as we celebrated in so many glorious ways the birth of our Lord. Then in 1936, on the eve of the Christmas Season, this church and the surrounding community were in total grief. All of the church programs were canceled and the Christmas carols gave way to a funeral dirge. The caskets of these two Christian people lying in repose in this our same sanctuary replaced the beautiful poinsettias of this past year. Miss Etta Treacle, then our faithful organist for years was too grieved to play and called in Mrs. Joe

Heflin from the Colonial Beach Church. Our rather young pastor, Charles Spurgeon Trammell stood and in moving words, paid tribute. The church, the aisles were packed. We had then no warm rooms for the overflow. Tears ran down the cheeks of many, so, so many. Many yes, except Dorothy, their only child. I see her still yet standing as a young girl of age 22, pregnant with her first child, showing no outward tears but rather with a radiant smile for everyone to see—surely a tower of strength for her family, her friends. Later she let it be known that her inward tears could never be counted.

Now seventy years later, almost to the date, Dorothy has left us to meet her parents in that heavenly realm. Throughout her life she continued to give of her best to both family and friends. In her later years she devoted much of her life to the care and keeping of her older half-brother Thomas who reached the age of 97. Dorothy in more recent years lost also one of her two daughters, Harriett. Along with her care for her family and friends, she too never forgot her church of her roots. While a faithful supporter of her church nearby in Rockville, Maryland, she always wanted to know about Round Hill.

She welcomed each month our monthly newsletter and digested it from page to page. Often when talking with her she would inquire about the goals of Round Hill, about its future. Often too a check would come in remembrance of someone she once had known. Often too she told me she only wished that she could do even more. Like her parents and her grandparents, her heart was forever filled for the love she had for her little church here in the wilderness.

Now she has slipped away. Her remaining daughter, Marie who lives in Mississippi has informed me that her mother's ashes shall be brought back here at a later date and be placed between the gravesite of her mother and brother Thomas in a graveside memorial service. Also, she told me that the few remaining members of Dorothy's family would be notified and also her church here at Round Hill. When this date is given, I hope it shall be possible that many can gather, whether they have known Dorothy or not, in final tribute to her. She indeed always looked beyond the clouds of life and saw only the sunshine. Her spirit I know shall always linger here with me within the walls of this church she loved so much.