



Dorothy Marie Stanek

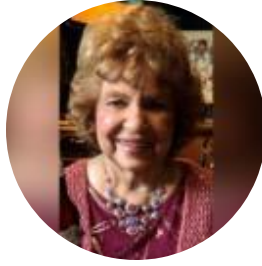
APR 13, 1928 - JUL 27, 2022



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Dorothy Stanek whose vibrant personality, devotion to her family and love of fun and dancing, even into old age, won her the nickname "Disco Dorth," died July 27 at the Paramount Bethel Park, an assisted living facility.

She was 94 years old.

Previously, she lived in Brookdale, an independent living facility in Mount Lebanon, where her thick, curly blonde hair, penchant for brightly-colored clothes and socializing with residents and staff earned her a second nickname, "Hottie Dottie."

But it was the three-story brick house on Bayridge Avenue in Brookline, owned by her and her husband John, that for five decades (1965 to 2015) served as the center of occasions both festive and sad and the ordinary joys of family life.

It was where their six children — three female, three male in that order — came to maturity soon to be followed by grandchildren. Often filled with the sound of rock and roll (Dorothy, as she cooked), and polkas blasting (Johnny, especially on Sunday mornings), it was also the stage for impromptu polka concerts by the adolescent boys playing trumpet, clarinet and violin.

"Grandpa James used to give me a dollar to sing in Polish" said Richard, the oldest son, who lives in South Park and provided the trumpet and vocals."

With John as disciplinarian, Dorothy, also strong-willed, created a close-knit family. After John's death in 2005, her children took care of her problems, drove her to the hairdresser every week, went to Mass at Resurrection in Brookline, and enjoyed her company at favorite bars and restaurants where she had a glass of beer with ice. Sometimes two.

"She was the perfect mother for whatever occurred or what was needed," said her son Jeffrey of Bethel Park (clarinet). "She was the heartbeat and glue that kept this family together."



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And she was practical, as well as possessing a sense of humor. She once planted colorful plastic flowers in her front yard and explained, "They don't need watering."

Her children said the house overflowed with her spirit of generosity and kindness for whomever came to the door.

"She was always wanting you to feel good no matter what was happening to her," said her son Eugene of Naples, Fla.. (tambourine.) "She was always welcoming."

When her sister Florence had to move from her house in Florida, Dorothy invited her to stay with her until she got settled elsewhere. The plan was for at most a month. Flo's son, Charlie was to get a job in Colorado and an apartment. But the plan fell through. Charlie died a few years later. A planned one month stay lasted eight months, but it did not throw Dorothy, who was in her eighties at the time.

"Flo and I would argue sometimes, but we had fun," Dorothy recalled. "We watched old 1940s romances and horror movies, 'Chuckie' about that horrible little doll, was our favorite. We laughed and laughed."

Dorothy James was born April 13, 1928 in Weirton, W. Va. one of four children of George James, a steel mill worker who went to work in the coal mines at age 13 and Helen Verbiar James, a housewife whose father died in a coal mine accident while she was still a young girl which forced her to find work in the homes of the well-to-do.

She moved to Pittsburgh with her family around 1935 when her father got a job as a roller at Jones & Laughlin Steel, Second Avenue works.

Growing up, Dorothy enjoyed ice skating and dancing, especially at Linden Grove. (She taught her father and two brothers how to dance.) In the summers she went with her family to see relatives in Newton Falls, Ohio. She recalled that her Aunt Anna would wake her at 5 A.M. for the milking of the family cow and then help her aunt deliver milk to the neighbors.

When she was graduated from St. Paul's Cathedral High School, her father, offered to send her to college as he did for his three other children, but she declined. Instead, she worked as a secretary for an automobile finance company in East Liberty and enjoyed it.



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When her family moved to Ward Street in Oakland in the late 1940's, the Stanek boys who lived in a house across the street took notice. Dorothy's younger brother, George, who was 10 at the time, was on the Stanek porch trading comic books with the youngest brother, when Johnny asked him, "Is that your sister?"

Then he said, "I'm going to marry that girl."

And he did: on February 14, 1953 Johnny Stanek, a stationary engineer, married that girl.

The newly-weds moved into the house of John's mother, Victoria. When the children started arriving, Dorothy's daughter, Vicki McGurk of Dormont, said it got crowded but not unpleasant. She remembered a sister and two brothers slept on bunk beds in an alcove on the second floor and she and another sister on rollaway beds. If anything, the closeness strengthened bonds.

"We all used to go to Schenley Park Sundays for picnics with the Stanek brothers and sisters and the cousins from down the street," Vicki recalls.

Dorothy never complained but was relieved when they moved into the spacious Brookline house. She lived there long after John's death, but finally sold it in 2015 after a mild stroke.

Dorothy was a woman of her time who believed strongly in the traditional roles of women and took them seriously, modeling herself after her mother.

"She used to sew clothes for us when we were little," said her daughter, Marie Stanek of Baldwin Township. "Jumpers and shorts. And I remember I liked everything she made."

Aside from childbearing and cooking, those traditional roles took in tougher duties like washing the floors and hanging out windows to wash them. Fortunately, her husband was handy as were her sons and the children helped her keep the house and her affairs in good shape.

And being a traditional mom did not mean she was housebound. In their younger years, Dorothy and Johnny left the children with their mothers, who enjoyed taking care of them, and had a social life, which included going to polka dances with one of Johnny's brothers, who because of his polka acrobatics, was called "Jumpin' Joe."



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Both gave time to the Polish Club for which Johnny was president and Dorothy secretary-treasurer. Dorothy routinely went to exercise and aerobics classes, joined a bowling league and often played bingo.

She also enjoyed going to bars like Zippy's with her late granddaughter, Rachel McGurk, who was more of a close friend, or with girlfriends for her one beer on ice, which the regulars thought hilarious. It was not unusual for them to include Dorothy in their social activities.

"She was part of the group," said Marie Stanek. "We'd take her to Amel's when we'd go and to places on Brookline Boulevard."

"She touches everybody," said a daughter Elaine Casey of South Park "Everywhere she goes people like her. She touches a lot of hearts."

Her son, Richard, said she was "very forgiving" and never held a grudge. The strength of her personality and her efforts for the family were in themselves accomplishments, he said.

"All of what made up her life, all the things she did, she had a good life," he said.

Dorothy is survived by her six children. Victoria "Vickie" (the late Kenneth, "Max") McGurk, Marie Stanek, Elaine (Kevin) Casey, Richard (Sharon) Stanek, Jeffrey (Barb) Stanek and Eugene "Gene" Stanek. She is also survived by her three grandchildren. Mike (Yuki) McGurk and their child Max McGurk (great grandchild), Jaimie (Jake) Rennie and Kara Stanek. She is also survived by great grandson Brendyn McGurk, son of the late granddaughter Rachel McGurk.

Dorothy's late brother, Bob James, a Pittsburgh area newscaster who died three months ago, once complimented on her legacy, how her children grew up to be fine people exemplified by how kindly they treated everyone.

"You have great children," he said.

To which she replied, "I do."

In lieu of flowers, please feel free to donate to the Metavivor Metastatic Breast Cancer Research, donate.metavivor.org or the Ave Maria Academy, avemariapgh.org



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Anonymous posted:

Thinking about your family and sending lots of love during this difficult time. With Sympathy, the Dombrowski Family

August 1 at 10:33 AM



Carol, Steve, Donny, Mickey And Ruth posted:

Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

August 1 at 5:38 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Dorothy by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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