



Ruth M. Puska

October 23, 1920 - February 3, 2015

Ruth M. (Rasmussen) Puska, a World War II U.S. Army Veteran, died on February 3, 2015 in the War Memorial Hospital. She was 94 years old. Ruth was born on October 23, 1920 in Big Bay, Michigan. Her ancestry was primarily Swedish, as well as Danish, Dutch and Irish. She grew up in Marquette, where she enjoyed outdoor sports, especially skiing, skating, and snowshoeing in winter. Ruth's mother died when she was a child and her eldest sister, Pearl, helped raise her. Although Ruth dreamed of serving as a cook on the Great Lake freighters or even "riding the rails" as a young girl, by the time she graduated from the Graveraet High School in 1938 her goal was to become a Registered Nurse. After working for a couple years, Ruth enrolled in the three-year RN program at St. Luke's Hospital School of Nursing in Marquette with the encouragement and support of her sister Pearl. Ruth was immediately put to work at the hospital to help care for patients suffering from a polio epidemic. As part of her nursing program, she also worked at the University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor. She graduated on September 18, 1943, and was certified with the Michigan Board of Registered Nurses on October 20, 1943. On January 4, 1945, Ruth volunteered for the U.S. Army Nurse Corps, where she served as a Second Lieutenant. She underwent basic training at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, which included night patrols on snowshoes into the woods in minus 20o F weather. Once, she said, her patrol of nurses got lost, and if the Chaplain had not had a compass and flashlight, they might still be there! At Fort McCoy's hospital, which housed mostly

Japanese prisoners, Ruth was exposed to new treatments in skin grafting. She also served in Fort Riley, Kansas, and worked in a skin ward in Chicago before shipping out from San Francisco to the Philippines in April 1945 on the SS Lurline, which had been converted into a troop ship and was operated by the Merchant Marines. Three hospital units were on the ship. During the 21-day voyage, the SS Lurline zigzagged across the Pacific in blackout conditions bypassing Hawaii and making a brief stop in New Guinea. When she arrived in the Philippines, Manila was in ruins - Manila Bay was full of sunken ships and the shipping piers could not be used. Ruth's unit, the 313th General Hospital, was moved from Manila to Batangas, where she cared for American officers and men who had been injured in the heavy fighting to liberate the Philippines, as well as an emaciated Dutch prisoner of war (POW). Ruth fondly remembered her Army experiences, and would have remained in service, but due to the Japanese surrender, the Army moved quickly to demobilize its forces, especially women, and she was discharged on March 11, 1946. Her awards included the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with Bronze Service Star, American Theater Campaign Medal, and Victory Medal. After the war Ruth settled in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, where she married a fellow veteran, Clarence Puska, in 1947. She worked at the War Memorial Hospital until she retired in March 1985. Like many women of her generation, Ruth was not only a skilled nurse, she was adept at sewing, knitting, embroidery, ceramics, cooking, canning, and baking. She created memorable desserts for her family and hospital coworkers. She loved camping on the shores of Lake Superior and picking blueberries. She enjoyed her collections of spoons, thimbles, and China figurines. After she retired, she took up crossword puzzles, enjoyed several trips around the U.S., and made a special trip to Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, where a highlight was a visit to her mother's birthplace near Stockholm. Ruth is preceded in death by her parents, Lewis Cass Rasmussen and Alma Matilda Kristina (Bergdahl); three sisters (Pearl Bernice Vertefeuille, Olga Edna Hoch, Edith Marie Rasmussen), five brothers (Walter, Peter Harold, Louis Carl, Raymond Theodore, and Jack

Arthur), and a ninth sibling who died in childbirth; her husband, Clarence John Puska, Sr.; and her son, Clarence John Puska, Jr. Her daughter, Susan Marie Puska, survives her. A funeral service will be held at 2:00 PM on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at the First United Presbyterian Church with Pastor Mark Gabbard officiating. Friends may call at the church from 1:00 PM until the time of the service. Burial will be at North Ruyard Cemetery later this spring. Memorials may be left to the War Memorial Hospital Auxiliary - Nursing Scholarship, C/O LSSU Foundation, 650 W. Easterday Ave., Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783.

Tribute Wall

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“ AUNT RUTH YOU WERE AN INSPIRATION FOR ALOT OF PEOPLE. YOUR UNSELFISHNESS TO SERVE AS AN ARMY NURSE. TO BE A DEDICATED REGISTERED NURSE, A WIFE, A MOTHER, A SISTER, A HELPFUL DAUGHTER-IN-LAW& SISTER-IN-LAW, AN AUNT WE LOOKED UP TOO. YOU & UNCLE CLARENCE HAD MANY YEARS TOGETHER. WE LIKED LOOKING AT YOUR COLLECTABLE THIMBLES AND SPOONS. STAY WARM IN HEAVEN, AND MAY YOU REST IN PEACE WITH ALL FAMILY MEMBERS THAT WERE WAITING TO GREET YOU. LOVE GOES WITH YOU. ALL YOUR MANY NIECES & NEPHEWS SAY THANKS FOR BEING PART OF OUR LIVES.

verda toler (niece) - February 21, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RL

“ I met Ruth many years ago when I was a college student in Michigan and her daughter Susan was my roommate. I was impressed that she had an interesting career as a nurse. In those days it wasn't common for women to raise children and work as hard as she did. She obviously was a great influence on her daughter Susan who has been so successful in her career as well. Most important, she was a very good woman. I am sure she will be sorely missed by her friends and daughter.

Rosemary LeVasseur - February 11, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ Susan, no wonder you were such an outstanding Army officer. Both of your parents were inspirational. We send our love and deepest sympathy for your loss of your mother. Best wishes, Dennis and Molly Blasko

Molly and Dennis Blasko - February 11, 2015 at 12:00 AM