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# Lena Durtschi

1917 - 2016

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## Lena Durtschi 1917—2016

Lena Kelley Durtschi, 98, of Rockford died Friday, February 26, 2016 at Bickford Senior Living. Lena was born on March 23, 1917 in Royalton, WI., the daughter of George S. and Ida (Tollefson) Kelley. She graduated with a degree in physical education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1939. During World War II, Lena served with a select group of female pilots, Women's Air Force Service Pilots (WASPs), the first women in history trained to fly American military aircraft. Immediately following the war, Lena was a flight instructor in the Monroe area and flew

commercially in that area. She later moved to Ames, IA., to teach physical education at Iowa State University prior to her marriage to William J. Durtschi, who had also been flying in the Monroe area. They were married on August 23, 1947 in New London, WI. Lena taught PE for a total of 29 years, retiring from teaching in the schools in Stockton, IL in 1973. She and Bill built, owned and operated Stockton Auto Body in Stockton from 1951 until Bill retired from the business. In 1978, upon his retirement, she and Bill moved to New Glarus, WI. where they lived for several years before moving to Rockford. During their retirement years, they enjoyed wintering in Mesa, AZ. She is survived by a son, William G. (Karen) Durtschi of Rockford; 2 grandchildren, Erica (Christopher) Schimmel of Rockford, and Thomas (Natalie) Durtschi of Cherry Valley; 4 great-grandchildren, Sydney and Olivia Durtschi and Willa and Emma Schimmel; and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband on Sept. 13, 2003; great-grandson Noah Schimmel; brothers, George and John Kelley; and sisters, Gretchen Kelley, Ethel Sheldon, Marit Kelley, Olive Kelley, and Elizabeth Riendl. Funeral services will be held on Thursday, March 3, 2016, at 12:30 p.m., at the Newcomer Funeral Home, 1329 31st. Ave., Monroe, WI. Interment will follow in Greenwood Cemetery, Monroe, WI. A luncheon is scheduled following interment. Visitation will be at the funeral home on Wednesday, March 2, from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Memorials are suggested in Lena's name to the Rockford Rescue Mission, 715 W State St., Rockford, IL 61102. Online condolences may be shared at [www.newcomerfuneralhome.net](http://www.newcomerfuneralhome.net)

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