



## Rasma Kalnins

August 5, 1913 - August 12, 2011

Rasma Kalnins, 98, of St. Joseph died Friday, August 12, 2011, at the Lakeland Continuing Care.

Services celebrating her life will be held at 11 AM on Tuesday, August 16, at the Saron Lutheran Church in St. Joseph. Burial will follow in Coloma Cemetery. The visitation will be held from 10 AM to 11 AM on Tuesday at the Church. Arrangements are by the Dey-Florin Chapel of Florin Funeral Service in St. Joseph. Memorials may be made to the Saron Lutheran Church. Memories may be shared at [www.florin.net](http://www.florin.net).

She was born August 5, 1913 in Riga, Latvia to Janis and Kristine Kalnins. Rasma came to this area in 1950 and had worked at the Whitcomb Hotel, Voice of Music, and Heath Company. She also taught dance at the YWCA. Rasma was a life member of the Saron Lutheran Church in St. Joseph and of the Latvian Lutheran Church in Kalamazoo. Rasma was a volunteer at the Blossomland Learning Center and was honored in 2005 for her volunteerism at the Center.

She is survived by her nephew, Karlis Druva, and his family of Kalamazoo. She was preceded in death by her sister, Lidija Druva.

# Cemetery Details

## Coloma Cemetery

5900 Coloma Road  
Coloma, MI 49038

# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG 16. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Saron Lutheran Church  
510 Main Street  
St. Joseph, MI 49085  
saron@acd.net  
<http://www.saronlutheran.org>

## Service

AUG 16 (ET)

Saron Lutheran Church  
510 Main Street  
St. Joseph, MI 49085  
saron@acd.net  
<http://www.saronlutheran.org>

## Burial

AUG 16 (ET)

Coloma Cemetery  
5900 Coloma Road  
Coloma, MI 49038

# Tribute Wall



“ *My grandmother worked with Miss Rasma at the Whitcomb Hotel for many years until it closed. It was from her that I knew Miss Rasma and in the late 50s/early 60s took ballet lessons from her at the YWCA in St. Joe for over 5 years. I just recently did a search of her name and found this obit and tribute wall. I'm not surprised she lived to be 98--she was always active. I'm sorry I missed her funeral--I would have been honored to be there in tribute to the fine lady who tried to take the 'tomboy' out of me.*

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**Penny Novy** - August 30, 2018 at 06:22 PM

RW

*When My three sisters and I were growing up, we also took ballet lessons with Miss Rasma. She was so wonderful, like a second mother to us all. I think of her often and cherish all the memories and everything she taught us. ❤️*

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**Robyn Womack** - November 05, 2020 at 03:53 PM

MG

*I had the honor of supervising Rasma when she was a volunteer in the Foster Grandparent Program. She was such an example of a loving kind human being. I will never forget her*

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**M. Sue Greiner** - July 18, 2024 at 06:09 PM

EP

“ *I am so sad that I missed Rasma's last years, and her passing. She was a pivotal person in my life, my first dance teacher, and a bright spirit. My favorite quote of hers was "You are the blacksmith of your happiness!"*

*Elizabeth Paxson*

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**Elizabeth Paxson** - June 13, 2015 at 11:45 AM

EM

“ I was one of the lucky students who took ballet classes from Rasma at the YWCA in St. Joseph, MI.

*Over the course of a few years, I learned only a little about Rasma's life in Latvia and how she had come to be in a small town in Michigan. She shared some of that history as well as some of the cheese sticks she made at the (then) Whitcomb Hotel--but most importantly, for me, she shared her positive outlook on life and her ethic of working hard. In addition to teaching us the basics of ballet, Rasma gave us free rein to dance our hearts out. I have memories still of her playing Chopin and dancing all over the YWCA gymnasium. It was marvelous, as was Rasma.*

*Emily McKnight  
Granger, IN*

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**Emily McKnight** - October 21, 2011 at 02:09 PM

RW

*I remember the cheese sticks and her wonderful cookies! I miss her.*

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**Robyn Womack** - November 05, 2020 at 03:55 PM

DB

“ *Rasma worked in my classroom for 15 years. Grandma Rasma was one of the most positive, selfless persons I have ever met. She never seemed to have a bad day. She always looked on the bright side no matter the circumstance. When she entered our classroom everyone’s mood improved. Her outlook was infectious and made our days brighter just by her being around. She was always thinking of others and took great joy in whatever she could do for someone else. I cannot recall her making a complaint about anything. Her love of life, nature and people was unconditional.*

*The world has lost a great human being.*

*Dan Betts*

*Teacher*

*Blossomland Learning Center*

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**Dan Betts** - August 31, 2011 at 03:04 PM

“ When I hear the the name Rasma, I think of Butterflies, ballet, singing, raccoons and bread. Let me explain, I married into the Latvian community when I married Robert Varpa. The Latvian's nature are so loving ,giving and caring. Rasma would walk around happy as a butterfly. She would move her body in dance everywhere she went singing and fulfilling life as it was her best day ever.



*I don't think the obit quite explained how dedicated she was to the St. Joe Y. She was a Volunteer Ballet teacher for over 50 years. Never paid, ALWAYS rich with love of others. I took care of her sister Lidija and nephew Janis Druva and was able to enjoy and learn from their hearts of gold. She had a heart for any and every thing. Rasma never married but had hundreds of kids thru the Y and Blossomland School. She worked there for.....ever! She could calm an angry student with her beautiful sense of humor and love. Loosing Rasma to the Lord is a BIG loss to the St. Joerph community. She never boasted or bragged. The people that did know Rasma could tell you many fun and loving stories. She learned ballet in France and was good at it. Born in Latvia and lived in German's displaced camps and blessed to become an American. To my knowledge she sang in the choir @ Saron Lutheran until the last 10 years or less. I am very proud to have known and was loved by Rasma.*

*My father-in-law Gunnars Varpa would go and get bread and supplies for them almost daily. Rasma would feed ALL the animals from the Silver Beach area at her house. I was scared for her feeding the oppossum and raccoons although, they were not scared of her and came to her when called. She was the animal lover. I couldn't count all the cat's and critters she would feed. She even would take stray cats to the vet if they were sick. We never knew if the owner's of the cat's knew that she was feeding them. She didn't care. She just spread her love to all . God bless you Rasma. I will never forget you and your love to this world.*

Karen Roland Varpa - August 15, 2011 at 07:27 PM

TC

“ Tammi (Barnett) Cripe lit a candle in memory of Rasma Kalnins



Tammi (Barnett) Cripe - August 15, 2011 at 08:26 AM

TC

*Rasma was my first and ONLY ballet teacher. I started ballet with her when I was 4 years old, in 1975. My sister, Laura, and I were in EVERY recital - spring and winter - for over 13 years. I remember Rasma always walking to class, no matter how cold it was, she was smiling and blowing kisses to everyone.*

*She gave me the happiest memories of my childhood. I remember everything about her - her ballet shoes, her pink tights, her blue leotard, her beautiful long gray hair that she would whip up into a bun in about 3 seconds .... she used to cook for days to prepare for the reception after each recital. She did it ALL herself, I had no idea at the time the amount of work that had to go into it. I do not know of anyone else who would do that.*

*Rasma call me "Little Tammi" ~ my sister and I spent every Saturday morning with her all through my elementary years and Jr. High and some HS.*

*I have thought about her often over the years. How I wished she could have taught my children, but we live out of state.*

*I remember she would wear her traditional Latvian dress for each recital, sometimes, she would lead us out for the "group dance" at the beginning, everyone always applauded.*

*I never, EVER saw Rasma sad or unhappy.*

*She used to walk through the gardens on the Bluff and blow kisses to the flowers ~*

*There are so many memories we have of Rasma. She showed me what it means to give to others, she showed me how to smile and enjoy life. I will forever hold her in my heart as the happiest and most caring person I have ever known.*

*I will miss you forever, Rasma, and I love you.*

*Little Tammi (Barnett)*

Tammi (Barnett) Cripe - August 15, 2011 at 08:43 AM