



Charlotte Rae Thompson

January 30, 1938 - May 10, 2026

Charlotte Rae (Ralls) Thompson died at home in Corvallis, surrounded by family, on Mother's Day, May 10, 2026. She was 88.

She was born at Corvallis General Hospital on January 30, 1938, to Verna Emma (Woodcock) Ralls and Charles Wesley Ralls, an engineer and glazier. She had an older sister, Georgia Ann. She descended from early settlers to Oregon.

Charlotte graduated from Corvallis High School in 1956, where she was involved in many activities including Pep Club, rally squad and class leadership. Even before high school, she had met the man she would eventually marry, Gene Norman Thompson, also of Corvallis and nearby Blodgett. She was outgoing and athletic. In 1957, she debuted as a member of the "Ski Rats," a group organized by Gene, which put on a waterski performance on the Willamette River, including "aqua-ballet," jumping and pyramid building. She was also a member of Sparskis, a high school snow-skiing club that took a bus up to Hoodoo Bowl and then hiked in from the highway since there was not yet a road.

She graduated from Oregon State University in 1960 with a degree in education. In college, she was a member of the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, where she made many lifelong friends. While still in college, she took a year off to become a stewardess for West Coast Airlines, flying in a Douglas DC-3, an early passenger plane that sloped down to a single wheel in the rear. She also taught elementary school after graduation.

Charlotte and Gene were married on Friday, October 13, 1961 in Las Vegas, where they had eloped across the high desert in a top-down convertible listening to their favorite song, "Moon River," on the radio. They had three children, but that didn't slow their adventuring. In the 1960s, Charlotte learned to fly a single-engine prop plane and was a licensed pilot, flying co-pilot to Gene on trips in a Piper Cherokee around the Northwest. They backpacked in the summers and skied in the winters. They also made many ski or camping trips with the Osgood Army, a constantly evolving group of friends forged on a ski trip in the 1960s that got together annually for more than 50 years.

Charlotte had a lifelong love of animals, making a home for many dogs, cats and even burros over the years. She would take in stray animals and spoil them, and was a longtime supporter of humane societies.

She loved being with people, and was known for her vibrant personality, kindness and love of laughter. She was active in a number of community organizations, including PEO, which supports education for women, and Zonta. She was a founding member of the Assistance League of Corvallis, a philanthropic organization. She was also an active volunteer and supporter of the annual Sun Valley Jazz Festival, organizing and hosting crews of friends to help out at the event. In the 1980s, she and Gene made a second home in Sun Valley, where they made many friends and loved skiing, as well as hiking with their beloved Briard sheepdogs.

Tennis was another ongoing theme in her life: Charlotte played in various leagues for years and helped manage the Tennis West club. Charlotte also loved international travel, especially as an empty-nester, taking trips with friends or family to places including Soviet Russia, Costa Rica, Japan and the Bhutan. She and Gene traveled together in Europe, skiing and hiking in the Alps and traveling to Ireland and Scotland. They also traveled around the country in a small motorhome nicknamed Dolly, often doing genealogical research on their pioneer ancestors, as well as to gatherings of the Oregon-California Trails Association. She and Gene also took each of their young grandchildren, usually one at a time, on trips around the country to see trains

and have other adventures. Her eldest grandchild named her “Gramma Go.” Late in life, Charlotte took great delight in her great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, her parents, her sister and brother-in-law Ted Szydlo. Survivors include her children Eric Thompson and his wife Carrie; Courtenay Thompson and husband Rick Attig; Gina Thomas and husband Vaughn; seven grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

The family is greatly indebted to the warmth and support of all the family and friends who helped them over the years, and especially in her last years: caregiver Jenna Kahl; friend and chef Shannon Corbin, who brought her meals every week; the “Angels” at Visiting Angels, especially Ellie, Norma, Linda, Heather, Lisa, Dom and Lois, along with their whole team; and the nurses, social workers and Dr. Helen Kao of Lumina Hospice & Palliative Care.

A drop-in Celebration of Life for Charlotte and Gene will be held on Friday, June 12, from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Corvallis Country Club, 1850 SW Whiteside Drive in Corvallis. We were unable to hold a memorial for Gene since he died during the pandemic, so we want to celebrate them both this year. No formal agenda but bring pictures and memories to share.

There will be a private family burial. Arrangements by McHenry Funeral Home.

Cemetery Details

Blodgett Cemetery

Blodgett, OR

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 12. 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM (Pac)

Corvallis Club
1850 SW Whiteside Dr.
Corvallis, OR 97333

Tribute Wall

CA

“ Dear Courtenay, Eric and Gina, I will always remember your mom's kindness, fun spirit, contagious energy, beauty, and a smile that lit up the room. I am sending love and condolences for this profound loss and well wishes that your grief is eased with loving memories and shared time together. Carrie Quatrano Singh

Carrie - May 31 at 10:09 AM