Caroline May “Carrie” Rettinhouse was attentive to her family and faith. She loved spending time with her husband, children and grandchildren, and her religious convictions shaped the values she held. She knew her own mind, worked hard and ran a taut ship, but she also volunteered her time in an effort to help others.

Caroline’s story began at a time when America was moving ahead in industry and transportation. Charles Lindbergh made his solo flight across the ocean and Henry Ford began producing automobiles along an assembly line. The nation was optimistic and the Roosevelt and Reva (Weed) Nielsen family of Grand Rapids, Michigan was excited by the birth of Caroline May on September 19, 1927. Caroline and her sisters were loved and cared for by their stay-at-home mother and hard-working father, a building supervisor for Grand Rapids Public Schools. Very sadly, their mom passed away shortly after a fifth child was born, leaving their father to care for his dear daughters: Virginia, Ann, Ruth, Carrie and Lori. About a year later, their father married Blanch Flora, and the girls made their way through school, attending GRPS of course.

From a young age, Carrie asserted her determination to face life in her own way. One time when she was learning her ABCs, her father asked her to recite the alphabet before getting in the car as the family prepared to go away. Carrie refused to recite them, so she was sent back to the house. When her dad went to get her and once again asked her to recite the alphabet, Carrie opened the door to get in the car and said, “A is for air” and flung the ABC book out the door! Carrie obviously advanced beyond the ABCs, because she graduated from Davis Tech High School in 1945.

In her early 20s, Carrie’s brother-in-law (Lori’s husband) suggested that Carrie go on a date with his friend Fay Rettinhouse. She agreed to a blind date, and the evening must have gone well enough for them to keep dating, because a year later they were married on May 12, 1950. The newlyweds first set up housekeeping in Fruitport and then moved to Grand Haven in 1970. They both worked good jobs, Fay a custodian and bus driver for Fruitport Schools before becoming an elementary school teacher for Coopersville Schools, and Carrie worked for Rycenga Lumber in Grand Haven. They made room in their lives for five wonderful children: Ann Marie, Dale, Donnetta, Dan and Jacque. Tragically, Dale passed away right after birth.
Family life was a combination of fun and discipline. As a routine, the children were expected to be up and dressed for 6:00 AM breakfast and home for dinner at 5:30 PM. Carrie and Fay were very supportive of their children’s activities, yet they took time to be with each other. Every Friday after Carrie got her hair done, the kids had goulash for dinner and Carrie and Fay went out for dinner at Russ’ restaurant. Summertime meant more family time as they took trips to Michigan’s Mackinaw and spent a memorable 4-week vacation in the American southwest. The family’s affection for their beloved wife and mother was especially evident on Carrie’s 53rd birthday. Fay helped the kids make a banner that hung outside in plain view: “People, people look and see, Carrie now is 53.”

Church attendance was a very important part of the Rettinhouse household, and the practice formed a foundation for the children’s lives. They only had to observe their parents’ volunteer work—to understand what it meant to serve faithfully in whatever way was needed.

In 1987, Carrie and Fay both retired, with Carrie having worked 28 years for Rycenga Lumber. With free time on their hands, Carrie and Fay became the directors of the “Super Seniors” at Spring Lake Baptist Church. In retirement, they spent meaningful time together and with their family. They took many a trip to Shipshewana and thoroughly enjoyed being with their grandchildren. In 1989, the two of them went on a very special vacation to Hawaii, but sorrow struck when Fay passed away shortly after their trip. Still, Carrie stayed connected with her children. In 1995, she took a trip to Disney and Mackinaw with her son, Dan, and his family. Carrie was especially involved with her grandchildren, Melissa and Tim, because she watched them part-time. The three of them must have had some kind of fun together, because the kids thought that their grandma was a crazy driver.

Over the years, Carrie enjoyed sewing and embroidery on plastic
canvas and continued to volunteer her time at church by folding the worship bulletins every Friday. Her activities were curtailed when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2007. She moved to Christian Haven nursing home after 37 years in her Grand Haven home. Then in July of 2009, she went into assistant living at Grand Pines in Grand Haven and died Monday, November 23, 2009 at the age of 82.

Carrie was a loving mother and grandmother who will be dearly missed by all who knew her.

Mrs. Caroline M. “Carrie” Rettinhouse is survived by her son, Dan (Mariann) Rettinhouse; daughters, Ann Marie (Jack) Cutting of Allendale, Donnetta (Dan) Vdovick of Ohio, Jacqueline Anderson of Ohio; 13 grandchildren; 2 great grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her husband, Fay, and son, Dale. Carrie was a member of Lakeshore Baptist Church, 13664 Lakeshore Dr., in Grand Haven, where a funeral service will be held Friday, November 27, 2009, 1:00 PM. Interment at Lakeshore Cemetery. The family will receive visitors on Wednesday, 7-9 PM at Clock Chapel-Grand Haven; and on Friday, 1 hour prior to the service at the church. Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of North Ottawa. Please visit www.clockfuneralhome.com to sign the online guest book or leave a memory.