**Dorothy Zehnder Bio**

**Warren G. Harding was President and Prohibition was in full swing when Dorothy Zehnder was born on her parents’ farm in Reese, Michigan in 1921, approximately 10 miles north of Frankenmuth. Her earliest memories include cooking simple, hearty dishes with her mother. Those same recipes are used today in the kitchen of the Bavarian Inn Restaurant.**

**Dorothy is co-founder and co-owner of Frankenmuth Bavarian Inn and the many business operations under that name. A far-reaching enterprise that includes** Bavarian Inn Restaurant and Castle Shops, [Covered Bridge Gift Shop](http://bavarianinn.com/shop/covered-bridge-and-leather-shop), Frankenmuth River Place Shops, Frankenmuth Gift Shops Inc., Bavarian Inn Lodge and a specialty line of food products. At full employment, there are approximately 1,000 team members and serve over 900,000 meals annually.

Dorothy started waiting tables at the Bavarian Inn Restaurant in 1937 when it was still Fischer’s. She and husband William “Tiny” became the managers when the family purchased the restaurant in 1950. During the 1957 recession, Dorothy and Tiny boldly expanded the business and spearheaded the transformation of Frankenmuth into Michigan’s “Little Bavaria” changing the restaurant’s name and architecture to reflect its German heritage. The Bavarian Inn has become one of the oldest and largest eateries in the USA. Being a continuous restaurant for 132 years since 1888 and among the nation’s 10 largest independent restaurants, the Bavarian Inn has the seating capacity for 1,200 patrons at one time. On a busy day, the Bavarian Inn will serve over 5,000 guests and annually serves over 350 tons of chicken!

Dorothy’s legendary business acumen makes her the perfect civic leader, educator, author and mentor. She has participated in various restaurant, tourism, governmental, religious and philanthropic organizations. At 98 years young, she continues to work 6 days a week at the restaurant with no plans to retire. She and her late husband have 3 children, 10 grandchildren, and 18 great-grandchildren. Son Bill and daughter Judy currently manage the family business along with their spouses, Karen and Don. Four of their children, the fourth generation, are in leadership roles in various business operations.

**Dorothy has written three cookbooks. Her first is Cookies & Bars with a collection of desserts used at the Bavarian Inn and in her home. In 2011, Dorothy published “Come Cook with Me,”** an 80-year collection of recipes, wisdom and stories from her life as Bavarian Inn’s much beloved matriarch. With the success of these, she wrote another cookbook in 2014 “From My Kitchen to Yours” featuring 195 handpicked family favorite recipes from her vast 1,000 plus personal collection.

Dorothy has received numerous awards during her 83 years in business. Also this year Dorothy is being recognized with the Saginaw Chamber’s Lifetime Community Service Award. She is also being inducted into the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame in 2020.