**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. Her earliest memories include cooking simple, but 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. It is a far-reaching enterprise that includes** Bavarian Inn Restaurant and Castle Shops, [Frankenmuth Cheese Haus](http://frankenmuthcheesehaus.com/), [Covered Bridge & Leather Gift Shop](http://bavarianinn.com/shop/covered-bridge-and-leather-shop), Frankenmuth River Place Shops, Bavarian Inn Lodge and a specialty line of food products. The company employs hundreds of team members and serves over 600,000 meals a year.

Dorothy started waiting tables at the Bavarian Inn Restaurant in 1937 when it was still Fischer’s -- an inn opened by German immigrants in 1888. She and husband William “Tiny” were installed as managers when William Zehnder, Sr. purchased the restaurant in 1950.

During the 1957 recession, Dorothy and Tiny boldly expanded the business and were part of a small group who spearheaded the transformation of Frankenmuth into Michigan’s “Little Bavaria” and changed the restaurant’s name and architecture to reflect its German heritage. Celebrating its 125th year in continuous operation in 2013, the Bavarian Inn has become one of the oldest and largest eateries in the country.

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 age 91, she continues to work daily at the restaurant and participate in strategic business development. She and her late husband have three children, 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Son Bill and daughter Judy currently manage the family business along with their spouses -- Karen and Don. Five of their children -- the fourth generation -- are in leadership roles in various business operations.

Dorothy has received numerous awards during her 75 years in business. Recently, Dorothy was named one of MLive’s “13 Michiganders to Watch in 2013.” **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.

Dorothy resides in Frankenmuth, Michigan.

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