

February 14, 2016

AAW bids farewell to Dorothy Austin

By [Allied Authors](#)

Dorothy Witte Austin, a longtime Milwaukee newspaper woman and member of the Allied Authors of Wisconsin, died Nov. 29, 2015, at age 97 in Portland, Tenn.



Dorothy was born Aug. 22, 1918, in Necedah, Wis., daughter of Emil Alfred Witte and Marie (Wake) Witte. She earned a bachelor's *cum laude* degree in journalism from Marquette University in 1940 and was a member of Theta Sigma Phi (later the Association of Women in Communications) and an honorary member of Gamma Pi Epsilon.

On Oct. 3, 1953, Dorothy married widower Harry Russell (Russ) Austin, who also worked at The Milwaukee Journal from 1944 to 1982, ending his career as reader-contact editor. He died March 3, 1994.

Dorothy is survived by three children, Steve Austin of Portland, Tenn.; Richard Kirk (Sage) Austin of Rio Frio, Texas; and Christopher Austin of Milwaukee, Wis., as well as grandson Matthew Russell Austin.

In her 33 years as a journalist, she worked at the Catholic Herald Citizen (1940-'43), The Milwaukee Journal (1950-'67) and The Milwaukee Sentinel (1970-'83). Dorothy's career included Red Cross staff assistant in South Africa and Italy during World War II (1943-'45); advertising copy chief at Gimbel's department store (1945-'50); and assistant and associate director of Milwaukee's popular Summerfest music festival (1967-'69).

She was a member of the Unitarian Universalist church in Milwaukee, Washington (D.C.) Press Clubs, Wisconsin Press Women, Allied Authors of Wisconsin (AAW), and the Women's Overseas Service League. She was inducted into the Milwaukee Press Club's Media Hall of Fame in 1985, the club's centennial year — eight years before her husband received the same honor.

"Dorothy was a pioneer for women in journalism. She tackled many obstacles and even won the right to return to work after having a child — probably the first woman in the history of The Milwaukee

Journal to do so," said retired journalist Paula Brookmire, who covered the feminist movement in the 1970s for The Milwaukee Journal when Dorothy was writing about the same for The Milwaukee Sentinel.

"Dorothy was one of the most interesting, hard-working, wonderful women I've ever met," said Maureen Mertens, fellow AAW member and freelance reporter for The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "Dorothy got the job done. No excuses. No complaints."

"She was a warm and loving person with a zest for life that remained until her last illness," said friend Rose Daitsman, a retired chemical engineer and minority-student recruiter who taught at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The family is planning a memorial service in Milwaukee sometime later this year.