

Memorial Minute for Elsie P. Tuss

July 10, 1932-October 2, 2019

Elsie Tuss, 87, died on October 2, 2019 at Peace Hospice in Great Falls, Montana. Her sister, Annette, was beside her as she died in the very early hours. She had been fighting cancer for the past 6 months. Even to the last day she was making sure that others carried on her many commitments to organizations she had supported.

She was born in Lewistown, Montana to Anna and Anton Tuss on July 10, 1932. She was in the older half of a large Catholic family. Living out in the country was made for Elsie, who thrived in the outdoors. She attended elementary school, and graduated from St. Leo's Catholic High School in Lewistown in May, 1949 and entered Sisters of Humility of Mary Convent in September of that year. For 32 years she was a teacher and administrator in elementary schools. Her love of children is reflected in the way she would always reach out and plan for any child that might come to our Quaker Worship Group.

In June of 1984, Elsie began 13 years as the rehab unit secretary at Deaconess Hospital in Great Falls. About this time she felt led by an inner conviction to be released from her vows as a sister of Humility of Mary. She was dispensed from her religious vows in October 1987 after 38 years as a sister.

In April 1994, she met Russ Salisbury, a farmer from Floweree, Montana. They met dancing and continued to dance at least weekly until the last year of their lives. In July 1997, Elsie retired as rehab secretary and moved to the Salisbury organic farm. She loved all that the farm could offer her from gardening to picking wild asparagus, to watching the animals, and welcoming the visitors that would come to the farm. She and Russ, who married on August 12, 2014, shared much in common. They both loved the care of the earth, the simple way to live life, and a generosity of spirit to all from hunters to those that made their straw bale house. Together they supported many of the same organizations like Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO), Missouri River Citizens, MT Wilderness Association, Organic Farm Certification Chapter OCIA, and Farmers' Union. They traveled to India to visit an ashram that Russ' parents had supported.

As a couple they sought out a spiritual fellowship they could both support. After participating with several other churches in the area, Russ suggested the Quaker Worship Group in Great Falls. He remembered his mother supporting the American Friends Service Committee in his youth. They were both very loyal to this small Quaker worship group and attended regularly, frequently in rain or snow traveling over an hour from their home. Elsie took on many of the tasks of the Great Falls Quaker group. After worship, they were off to dance at the local Elk's Club.

Russ died at home from cancer, and as he was dying, Elsie decided that she wanted to be a member of the Religious Society of Friends. In her letter requesting membership she wrote, "I am particularly struck by the basic Friends' principle of 'living a spiritual life by following one's inner leadings and adhering to practices to which one is committed'." She was accepted warmly into membership of the Society of Religious Friends in the Monthly Meeting of Montana Gathering of Friends (MGOF). Elsie

attended several MGOF meetings and North Pacific Yearly Meeting's Annual Sessions. She said that she was impressed by the consistency of the Quaker focus and practice at Annual Session.

Elsie was always one ready for a new adventure, ready to follow her spirit, to speak her truth without apologies and to do whatever was needed. She was instantly there. She made others comfortable and was warm and welcoming. She gave generously of her material resources to those who had need or cause.

Sometime in the last year, Elsie had a dream that she shared with a number of us in the Great Falls worship group. There was a brilliant yellow light. The Quakers were in the circle of this brilliant light. In the center of each person in the circle was a multicolored pillar. This pillar and lights were each one's personal inner gifts. All were bonded together by the brilliant yellow light as each one stood centered in their multicolored pillar of inner gifts. Elsie will be deeply missed by her large family, many, many friends, and our small Quaker worship group of which she was a large part.