

Memorial Minute – Mary Dwan – April 26, 1941 – June 22, 2020

Mary Dwan was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, the second child of Milton Rosenbaum and Jean Grossman. She died peacefully in her sleep at her home in Springfield, Oregon on June 22, 2020 of pancreatic cancer.

Mary was a curious, outgoing, and artistic child who kept diaries, recounting her adventures, her love of friends and school, and her favorite activity: summer camp. She grew up with her beloved siblings: older brother Mike (who pre-deceased her, also dying of pancreatic cancer) and younger sister, Liz. The three remained the closest of friends throughout her life.

Mary received her B.A. in Modern European Literature at Stanford. In 1966 She married her first husband, Herman Grishaver. She taught literature in California and then moved to New York to earn an M.A. in Education from Columbia. Her first son Alex was born in 1967. The family moved back to California where second son Mike was born. In San Diego she co-founded the first integrated nursery school in the area. After an amicable divorce Mary moved to the Bay Area where she went back to graduate school, earning a Masters in Psychology. This led to a long and successful career as a counselor, educator, and psychotherapist.

Mary met Rob Dwan in 1973 and they were married at Yosemite in 1975. Their son Rafael was born in 1979. Mary and her family moved to Eugene in 1984 where she rapidly built a thriving therapy practice focusing on marriage and family therapy, helping hundreds of individuals and families.

Initially Mary was active at Temple Beth Israel, but eventually found her way to Eugene Friends Meeting. In her letter requesting membership, she told of her childhood commitment to pacifism and her desire to be a Quaker because of the Peace Testimony. However, she thought that Quakers were extinct and her desire didn't reach fulfillment until many years later. At her first meeting for worship here, she felt, "I have come home." She was immediately attracted to the Quaker form of silent worship and to the respect shown for an individual's personal experience of the Spirit.

In the lack of a creed and the commitment to social action Mary also found similarities to the religion of her heritage, Judaism. She became a member of Eugene Friends Meeting in 1994 and wanted to be of service. However, traveling to visit family and friends was also an important part of her life, especially after retirement. Until Hurricane Irma destroyed their home in 2017, Mary and Rob lived part of the year in Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands. Her detailed journal of that time is a brilliantly written account of trauma and survival against horrific odds. But whenever she was in Eugene she made a point of giving her time and creativity in service to the Meeting. Several years ago she joined with two other artists to bring more art into the Meeting community. While maintaining anonymity as the Friendly Fantoms, the gleeful threesome created pop-up opportunities for creative expression for all ages. Among her many contributions to the life of the Meeting, she was a member of the Nominating Committee and the Children's Religious Education Committee, and recently helped

organize a group of like-minded Friends to brainstorm ways for the Meeting to engage in outreach to the wider community. Because she herself had received so much from the Quaker Way, she wanted to share her experience with others. Mary was a writer, a poet and an artist. Her lively, colorful watercolors graced the small meeting room for several weeks earlier this year.

When Mary received her diagnosis she considered her options with her usual clarity. Although ready to die, saying many times that she had led a full, rich life, she still wanted to live. To enhance the quality of the life that remained, she decided to do chemotherapy, which had positive and negative effects.

Love was the recurring refrain of Mary's life. Love of family and friends. Love of nature and the arts, of learning and discovery. In her wisdom, she understood that love is a verb, not just an emotion, and it requires effort. During the last six months of her life Mary gave and received love on a truly remarkable scale. Caring Bridge provided a forum for friends and family to send daily messages of encouragement and support, sometimes from half a world away. And she, in turn, gifted us with words of wisdom—often eloquently expressed philosophical essays—humorous reflections, poetry, and artwork. She also shared her questions, fears and pain, with courage and honesty. At times it was difficult for her to find the strength to communicate, but she made the effort for as long as she could, and all of us were enriched by her sharing. She consistently and publicly expressed her gratitude to her husband, Rob, for his steadfast devotion and for the many big and little things he did to keep her and their household going. She died as she had lived--with grace, courage, and integrity. Thank you, Mary, for sharing your life with us. We love you and we miss your smiling presence.

Note: A more detailed biography of Mary's fascinating life is attached.