

A Celebration of Life
Eva Toni Hearst
August 15, 1921—February 28, 2014
March 22, 2014

Please put your cell phone on a reverential setting.

GATHERING MUSIC Bill Wentz, Piano

WORDS OF WELCOME Rev. David Takahashi Morris

LIGHTING THE CHALICE Eva's Grandchildren

"Grains of Sand," read by (grandchild)

All of the poems shared today were written by Eva.

REMEMBRANCE AND MEDITATION SierraLynne White

POEM "Passage Graves" Read by Alan Hearst

EULOGY Rev. David Takahashi Morris

POEM "The Old Aborigine" Read by David Hearst

REMEMBRANCES FROM FAMILY

Norman Hearst

Julie Hearst

MUSICAL GIFT "Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep"

MDUUC Choir

REMEMBRANCES FROM FRIENDS

Isabel Johnson

Beth Snortum

Gayle Eleanor

POEM "The River" Read by Dee Simmons

MEDITATION Rev. Leslie Takahashi Morris

CLOSING WORDS "Alaska, 1979" Rev. David Takahashi Morris

POSTLUDE "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik," at Eva's request

Words of Welcome

Welcome to this sanctuary of memory and hope. We've gathered today to honor in words and in memory, in music and in silence, the life of Eva Hearst. Whoever you are, whatever connection to Eva or to her family and loved ones brings you here today, welcome, and thank you for your presence.

There's a Buddhist blessing that says: "Joyfully participate in the sorrows of life."

What more fitting way could there be to understand our purpose here today? When we say farewell to one who has died, we bring a great sense of loss to the occasion, along with much that might remain unfinished for us—words we meant to say but never did, moments we hoped to share but never will. We acknowledge an ending, ready or not, an undeniable finish to one part of Eva's life story—and our own.

If we say there is no sorrow we are not being honest, and there is no place for dishonesty here at the boundary between life and the mystery. Let us acknowledge the fullness of truth: The loss of someone we love is hard for us to accept, no matter how long they have lived, no matter how prepared we think we are. Our sorrow honors them, for it is a mark of our love. And yet there is joy as well: there is joy because we see in each other's eyes that we are not alone in our feelings; there is joy because we remind each other of wonderful moments in the lives of our loved one, which are of course wonderful moments of our own lives as well. There is joy because we remember together that we have shared a great gift, the gift of life, the gift of love.

As we share our stories and open our hearts, we seek to make Eva's presence with us as real and as honest as possible, so that we might say a true farewell and send her on her way into the mystery with our blessing. Yet in that presence we also begin to know the ways in which she is with us still. As the great Universalist Kenneth Patton wrote: "The dead are truly dead, yet they truly live on in us, as we will live on in our successors. . . . As we say good-bye to them, we bid them welcome again to our minds and our hearts."

There is joy in this sorrowful time because we know that even though Eva has gone from among us in one way, she is here as well: we see her in the faces of her children and grandchildren; we recognize her in the lives that have been touched by hers; we greet her in the memories that we keep and that we share. We will hear her voice, as well, for the poetry that is read today is all written by Eva; the particular pieces were chosen by her for this occasion, along with the music, in conversation with her friend and spiritual companion SierraLynne White.

"Love never dies," the apostle Paul told his Corinthian congregation. We are here today to give meaning to those words. So even as we bid one another welcome into this sacred space and time together, let us bid Eva Hearst welcome in our minds and in our hearts. This time belongs to her.

Eulogy for Eva Toni Hearst

Eva Toni Benary was born on August 15th, 1921 in Frankfurt, Germany, the only child of Wilhelm and Margot Benary. Her father, a psychologist with an interest in anthropology who had been promised by his own father that he would never have to work, was called by the family to return to the small Eastern German town of Erfurt to help with the business, just as the Nazis were beginning their rise to power.

Eva's father kept the family in German even as war began to threaten, a decision that continued to puzzle her many years later. In a 1982 interview about her early life, she attributed it finally to a sense of obligation toward his brothers, and to the social pressures on a business owner in a small-town culture, where the owner was seen as responsible for the well-being of all the business' employees and their families. This reluctance to break conventional bonds when the situation demanded action, and the price Eva felt she had paid for it, was perhaps one early source of the courage and decisiveness which become so clear in Eva's later life.

In 1947 Eva was able after much waiting to obtain a visa to go and visit family friends who had emigrated to Sweden. When she learned that it was possible for a German in Sweden to obtain a U.S. visa—something that was totally impossible back home in Germany—she didn't hesitate. With the sponsorship of a Jewish family in Berkeley, whom her father had encouraged to leave Germany before the war even as he refused to go himself, Eva moved to America in 1948 at 27 years of age.

She had an adventurous journey, including weeks as the only passenger and the only woman aboard a freighter bound for Alabama, and an arduous train trip via New Orleans to Los Angeles, where the family she was going to stay with were attending—of all things, after such a harrowing time—the UCLA-UC Berkeley football game.

Eva's experiences in her childhood and young adult years haunted her sometimes. She told me recently that she wondered for many years whether there was something wrong about her life, whether she should have done something other than focus on the ferocious struggle to survive in an intolerable and deadly situation. In the end, she decided, there was no value to returning to the past and wondering how it might have been different. Poetry became a way for her to come to terms with her story and her feelings. "Time to forgive myself," she wrote in a poem called "Survivor's Guilt," the last work in a 2008 collection called *In the Wake of the Swastika*.

In California, Eva found work, a new beginning to her life, and a man named Peter Hearst. They were married in 1949, while he was studying for a PhD at Stanford; they lived in Palo Alto, and then settled finally in Oxnard. There in Southern California Eva's three sons were born—David in 1954, Norman in 1956, and Alan in 1962.

Along with the joyful work of raising her children, Eva engaged in many other ways with her life in Oxnard, especially in volunteer work. An active member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ventura, she sang in the choir and helped to design and build a new auditorium there. She was an avid outdoorsperson as well, a love which continued right into her most recent years,

when friend Betty Allen remembers that Eva loved to hike all around the open spaces that surround us here. She backpacked right into her nineties.

Eva and Peter's marriage ended while their youngest son Alan was in high school. In 1986, she decided to move to Walnut Creek to be close to where her sons and their families had settled. Grandchildren were more important than being comfortable in familiar surroundings. Eva loved being surrounded by children and grandchildren, especially in a cabin or another beautiful natural setting. And her children say she liked being asked for advice—although they hasten to add that she was always wise enough to wait until she was asked.

In 1991 Eva became a member of this congregation, where she also sang in the choir and took part in many other activities, which I know you'll hear more about from some of her friends today. She told Leslie and me that friends like Betty Allen, who came by weekly to see her after she stopped driving, Dee Simmons, who helped her get out in the world, and many others were helping her to stay hopeful in these most recent years when she didn't have the strength to move around the way she liked to do. Her friends remember conversations with Eva as wide-ranging and multifaceted, including the news of the day, politics, travels and all sorts of other things. She loved to explore life's mystery, as you'll hear, yet she knew it wasn't a topic of conversation for everyone. As Betty said: Some friends you could talk about spirituality with and others you just didn't.

Eva's love of travel grew in the years after her children were grown, and she took trips all over the world. In recent years those travels have included trips to Malta, Africa, Iceland, and Australia. She traveled with Jeremy Taylor's dream group, and took Elder Hostel trips with Betty and Bob Allen. For her 80th birthday she went to the Galapagos, living aboard a trimaran, a trip her children name as one of the great highlights of her life.

She was a tenacious traveler, too. On a trip to Rwanda she became so exhausted during hours of climbing up to where mountain gorillas might be seen that David remembers worrying about how he would explain her demise to the rest of the family—but when they arrived and were close to those magnificent cousins of ours, all her weariness disappeared. On the Galapagos trip a companion wanted to help her safely climb across the trimaran's slippery deck when she told him firmly, "I can do it." I've heard the same words, no doubt in the same tone of voice, only a few weeks ago when I made the mistake of offering to help her up from a chair.

The drive to be independent and capable of being active in the world was very much a part of Eva's being. It was with her when she had a heart attack 20 years ago, and told her family "I will not be an invalid." It was with her when she decided more recently to undergo cancer treatments, which turned out to be very successful. And it was with her right up to the end. Eva felt strongly that the quality of life she wanted was more important than making it last a little while longer. She was not unafraid; but she was not about to let fear make her decisions for her.

Eva Hearst died on February 28, 2014.