

Elizabeth Shepherd

Funeral Service

Saturday, August 24, 2013

Minister's Introduction (Minister, Mary Hinrichs)

We are gathered today to honor the life of a beloved member of the Fellowship, our dear friend, Peggy Rogers Shepherd, whom many of us knew by the name Elizabeth.

We welcome Peggy's daughters from New Orleans, Roxanne and Pamela, and thank them for fulfilling their Mother's wish to return to the property here at Apollo. Welcome also to Diana, Peggy's close friend and yoga student from Sacramento.

Elizabeth Shepherd's life forms another jewel in the history of our School. The love she gave to her family and friends, the efforts she made, the lessons she learned, her gift of understanding the simple truth of Presence, her dedication to her evolution, and her consistent valuation for her Teacher, all these deeply touch us.

Each student raises the School through their efforts and their being. Let us stand, and remember Elizabeth with our silent presence.

Thank you.

Our Teacher has said, "Ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared, having received the presence allotted to them in this lifetime." As Elizabeth returns to the divine source, let us remember that our lives are preparation for another phase, the phase of the soul.

Music: Justin McKay

Pachelbel, "Canon in D"

Reading: Susan Rainier

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Sonnet XLI

I thank all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,
To hearken what I said between my tears,
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That they should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

Eulogy: Michael Lester

So much of Elizabeth is about beauty: what she loved and what she gave.

Elizabeth found a bookmark and joined the School in New Orleans in 1978. She worked as a high school English teacher, and as a choreographer for the high school Drama Department. She and her husband, friends from childhood, had two daughters, Roxanne and Pamela. Roxanne and Pamela are parents to five of Elizabeth's grandchildren, a great grand-daughter, and a great-grandson now on the way.

In 1980, Elizabeth moved to Apollo. She played a big part here. She was maître d' at Apollo d'Oro. She lived here for eighteen years. A friend observed, "Elizabeth was dedicated to third line for many years and was very consistent."

Another friend remembered, "She had a certain way of speaking. She could dance with her words." Elizabeth had great style. Stylish, an inspiration, someone to look at. She was as rich in her American essence as European students and the cultural influence they brought.

Elizabeth loved beauty. She collected art books. Dozens of her well-used books on the Fourth Way, the Tarot, Yoga, are filled with penciled underlines. Notes and comments fill the margins and reveal the depth and passion that informed her studies. Her closets were full of designer clothing and premium shoes. Exotic fragrances and scents filled her home.

Yet Elizabeth was not oblivious to the harshness of life. She had a talent for blending worlds, dealing out any balance between hard tack and spun sugar. A friend said, "I loved Elizabeth because she was so amazing. I always felt uplifted and hopeful with her."

Elizabeth loved dance, the essence of beauty in human form. Harmonizing male and female into the human aesthetic. She formed an Isadora Duncan dance group at Apollo, tracing its roots back to the spirit of the ancient Greeks. In 1982, she was the first to dance, on point, in Apollo's long history of ballet performances.

Elizabeth moved to Sacramento in 1998. She was deeply impressed with the principles of School work and carried this valuation with her. In Sacramento, she began to earn a living as a professional Yoga instructor. Because her classes were her sanctuary, Elizabeth cast a spell which all her students entered with her. Yoga was dance for Elizabeth. Often, she repeated "Without presence, Yoga is just Asian calisthenics." She taught 10 to 20 classes per week, 90 minutes per class, 35 and sometimes 50 students per class.

Two of her closest students, Diana and Sandy, are with us here today. A student said of her approach to teaching Yoga, "Elizabeth was saying: The beauty in the soul of me regards the beauty in the soul of you."

Of the last three prospective meetings in Sacramento this year, all three candidates drew their connection exclusively from Elizabeth Shepherd.

Elizabeth trusted Conscious Influence even in little things. She valued and worked for a beautiful life. She valued her connection to our teacher, Robert Burton. She worked hard to stay connected to the school with very modest income.

A student confided to me, "Her life was like a song that opened joyfully at the end."

Elizabeth received many affectionate and supportive messages from friends and students in her final days. Hospital staff sensed something different. They were very nice to her. She did not complain. She transformed suffering. I said to her that she seemed so alert. She said in a matter-of-fact way, "I am trying to be present."

Her last days were a dignified, beautifully orchestrated exit.

When Laura and Diana drove Elizabeth to the airport for her final return to New Orleans, they inadvertently made the loop three times before finding Departures. Elizabeth thought it funny how much they did not want to see her go. When they parted, Elizabeth looked into Laura's eyes and said softly, "We had fun, didn't we?"

As a member of the school, Elizabeth became her true self. She trusted Conscious Influence with the contradictions she was experiencing. She had the wisdom to meet death well, with the correct attitude. For what death is, Elizabeth died well. She knew her heart was true.

Music: Justin McKay

Mozart, "Für Elise"

Reading: Kathleen Stavosky

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou own'st;

Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Minister's Conclusion:

At her passing, we see Elizabeth Shepherd's life as a whole, her accomplishments, the things and the

people loved by her heart. Ultimately, her life is more than what has happened and what was done. In Roberts' words we can see that "she lived her full life on point". It is the simple, unobtrusive moments of presence that add significance to the seventy-four years Elizabeth danced and breathed on this earth.

May Elizabeth's poise and radiance inspire us.

May her love for her family and friends deepen our love for one another.

May her diligent search for the truth help us live our truth.

With loving gratitude, dear Elizabeth, We Thank Thee.

Candle ceremony

"Our body is just a shell, our soul will continue."

Procession