

Memorial Service for Rosemary Rexford

Rosemary Rexford
May 26, 1926 – October 18, 2020

Memorial Service

January 17, 2021

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Music as guests arrive: Guitar

Paul DeSilva

Householder Announcements: Deborah

Minister Gail Matthews's Introduction

Dear Friends, we have gathered here together on this winter's day in this sacred place to honor and celebrate the life of our beloved friend, Rosemary Rexford. Although it is never easy to say farewell to a beloved friend, our dear Teacher tells us that, "C Influence does not give us a difficult play without having given us the way to transform it," and that we must, "Bless the light we cannot see." Although a dear friend's absence may be difficult to bear, it can never diminish the treasure of our shared moments of presence.

Let us stand and remember our friend Rosemary in silent presence.

[Silence]

Thank you. Please be seated.

Rosemary's return to the source of creation is a fate that we all share. Robert teaches us that ascending souls finish their roles very well prepared, having fully received the presence allotted to them in this life.

Reading: Emily Dickinson poem

Reader: Virginia Fujioka

Elysium is as far as to
The very nearest room,
If in that room a friend await
Felicity or doom.

What fortitude the soul contains,
That it can so endure
The accent of a coming foot,
The opening of a door.

Eulogy

Elizabeth Blake

Rosemary Rexford was born on May 26, 1926, in the state of Vermont. A venerable student, she was a member of the Fellowship of Friends for more than forty years, and at the completion of her task, she was our

Memorial Service for Rosemary Rexford

oldest member.

Rosemary joined the Fellowship of Friends in the summer of 1977 having already lived half a century. As a young woman, she attended Goddard College, married, and had five children. When Rosemary's husband was hired by the Cooperative League to train farmers in cooperative farming, Rosemary moved with him and their children to India, where they lived for two years. One year after their return to Vermont, Rosemary's husband died, leaving her a widow at the age of 40. After his death, Rosemary went back to college, edited the college magazine, and received her Bachelor's degree. She went on to work for the State in different departments.

Her children all grown, Rosemary came from Vermont to California having heard that there was a real school there and to attend prospective student meetings at Anna Gold's home. The stamp of Influence C guiding Rosemary's play was already evident even in that early meeting, as her first encounter with the school was through Anna Gold, a woman like herself of "mature" age.

Soon after joining, Rosemary moved to Apollo, establishing it as her home. She became the vegetarian cook at what was then called the Lincoln Lodge.

During her first months at Apollo, Rosemary and I shared a home. One of my first memories of her was of her hiking with a backpack that grew in weight each day. She was preparing for a trek to the Himalayas. Rosemary had a plan and the determination to follow through on that plan in everything she did. And yes, she did climb the Himalayas.

Another plan Rosemary had was to live at the Fellowship chateau in France. To that end she, along with other students, took French lessons. And in the summer of 1980, her plan was realized with the help of our Teacher's advice that she go there, get a job, and visit the Louvre once a week—which she did. Rosemary's French was good enough for her to find employment with a woman who was the premier painting restorer at the Louvre, and who spoke no English. Together they traveled, visiting a small village where Rosemary did some macrobiotic cooking, and to Fontainebleau to see the train station where Gurdjieff used to go. Within the year, our Teacher asked Rosemary to return to Apollo where she resumed her role as vegetarian cook.

The Teacher continued to guide Rosemary's play in a way which she clearly understood. She once said that, "C Influence use the resources that are available, and they used Robert to influence my play."

After about one year of working in the kitchen, Rosemary was ready for a change – a change that would result in a complete venue shift from the kitchen to the slopes of the vineyard. This did not come all at once, first answering the phones in the vineyard office, then working on the slopes one day a week; finally Grant transferred her full time to the vineyard. This transfer was the beginning of a lifelong friendship with Grant and Marie.

Memorial Service for Rosemary Rexford

The Teacher's presence was felt once more as he directed Rosemary to additionally become knowledgeable in the growth of olive trees and the curing and processing of the olives. For the next fifteen years, she served as Vineyard Secretary, demonstrating a depth of commitment to the vineyard, to Grant, and to her work; while at the same time, overseeing the planting and growing of olive trees, curing and preserving olives, and eventually becoming involved in the first production of Apollo Olive Oil.

As a result of her efforts, our Teacher sent her as a traveling teacher to Italy and also to visit olive presses in Italy, Spain, Greece and Israel, learning how these countries had expressed oils for centuries. Rosemary related that, "This could hardly have been of more influence in my work. It was a wonderful experience."

Another aspect of Rosemary was her five of diamonds center of gravity, which led her to be of use to our Teacher in quite a different manner – often doing research for him on a variety of subjects, including tracking the arrival of the swallows in the spring.

To provide more balance to her daily life, Rosemary spent seven years volunteering at the library, bringing water from the Lodge spring to make tea. How can words adequately describe the beauty of such a quietly simple determination to evolve?

A running thread in the tapestry of Rosemary's life was her love of music, particularly singing. It was, therefore, no surprise that she joined the Fellowship chorus at its inception, and performed in its first concert led by Michael Goodwin. For ten years, Rosemary continued to participate in the chorus and then in the newly formed Orpheo Ensemble for another five years.

Now, well into her eighties, Graylin invited Rosemary to tend to the humming birds and their feeders around the Galleria. Upon seeing her, The Teacher commented that he hoped to be as agile as Rosemary when he was in his eighties.

Rosemary understood the importance of, and was grateful for, remaining active and involved in all aspects of the School and the Apollo Community. In a letter written in 2011, Rosemary said: "I am growing old – I am old – and it is wonderful for me to have a purpose, to have octaves to do."

Although eventually Rosemary was not able to continue to be active, and spent her final years living in Vermont, far away from her beloved home, Apollo; this is the Rosemary we will remember – a strong woman with a purpose, a commitment, a consistency and dependability in every octave in which she participated. And most of all, as a loving friend with an abiding devotion to her Teacher, the school, and her work. Surely the angels watching over the evolution of our dear friend Rosemary are well pleased, as her whole life in the school stands as a testament to her name. After all, Rosemary is for remembrance.

Music: Stairway to the Stars

Musician: Paul DeSilva

Memorial Service for Rosemary Rexford

[Reading: The Last Invocation, Walt Whitman]

Reader: Corrina Craigmill

At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted.
Let me glide noiselessly forth;
With the key of softness unlock the locks--with a whisper,
Set open the doors O soul.

Tenderly--be not impatient,
(Strong is your hold, O mortal flesh,
Strong is your hold O love.)

[Minister Gail Matthews' Conclusion]

Our dear Teacher reminds us that from the cradle to the grave, we are never alone. Higher Forces have a plan, and however majestic that plan may be, and however insignificant we are in comparison, we as ascending souls, are participants in this grand design. Our participation is our life's journey toward God. Like Rosemary, we are all travelers. It's only a trick of mortal vision that keeps us from seeing her still. From the beginning of Rosemary's journey in the Work, she too had a plan. Her plan was awakening. Her strategy was to head in that direction and continue till the end. Pacing herself with balance and guidance from her beloved Teacher, she is now well on her way.

As we say farewell to Rosemary, let us remember her life as the gift it was to us all.

May the strength of Rosemary's commitment to her work and to her beloved Teacher help lead us to a deeper understanding of service to the Gods.

May Rosemary's strong dependable nature be for us a reminder that true success lies not in beginning but in enduring.

And may Rosemary's ability to be loyal to each endeavor she committed herself to, especially to her aim to awakening, lead us to a better understanding of the true meaning of a promise made and a promise fulfilled.

Rabia said, "Love comes from eternity, and returns into eternity." The inner divine flame returns to its divine source. The circle of life is complete. We part, only that we may meet again.

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

Memorial Service for Rosemary Rexford

Dear Rosemary, excellent friend, fellow traveller, we thank you.

Let us bid farewell, with a toast.

[Toast: By Grant Ramey:]

Let us toast to our dear friend Rosemary and celebrate her long and productive life.

Minister Closing

The service is complete.

If you would like to view Rosemary's plaque on the Memorial Column please maintain social distancing and walk on the stone path to protect the baby daffodils.

Minister leads the funeral party to the plaque