



## Barbara L. Mykrantz

November 22, 1928 - June 7, 2013

Barbara Louise Larrabee Mykrantz was born on Larrabees Point, Vt., on the shores of Lake Champlain (near Shoreham, Vt.), to Ernest and Rieta (Campbell) Larrabee.

She grew up on a hilly farm with apple orchards planted by her great-grandfather and expanded by her grandfather and father. Farm life was hard but satisfying. The needs of the dairy herd marked the hours of each day. Horses still were used for work and transportation. Barbara learned to drive a hay truck and a front-end loader at the age of 12.

From her family she inherited passions for learning and the natural world. She was a child of the Depression and took to heart the Vermont expression “Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.” She attended a one-room schoolhouse with her brother, Wesley, and sister, Janice. An insatiable reader, she devoured nearly every book in Shoreham’s village library. At 5’0” and 90 pounds, she played guard for Shoreham High School’s basketball team.

Barbara earned a degree in botany at the University of Vermont in 1950 and worked as a lab instructor at Dartmouth College while pursuing her master’s degree in plant pathology. At Dartmouth she encountered an undergraduate who was persistent in his attentions. Her roommate said, “You can do better.” Last year, while recounting the story, Barbara fiercely stated, “I think not!”

Barbara and Jack were married May 4, 1953, and moved to Norfolk, Va., where Jack served as a carrier pilot in the U.S. Navy. Barbara taught at the College of William and Mary. In Virginia, Barbara and Jack had their first child, Lisa. After the Navy, Barbara and Jack returned to Dartmouth. After graduate school, Jack's career took the family from Hanover, N.H., to Wilbraham, Mass. Peter, Andrea and John were born there.

Jack's work moved the family again and again: St. Louis, Mo.; Boulder, Colo.; Chicago, Ill.; and back to St. Louis. In all parts of the country, the family explored the natural world together: canoeing, hiking, backpacking, downhill and cross-country skiing.

After all her children had started school, Barbara continued her own education and career, pursuing a certificate to teach secondary school and a master's degree in library science. She taught science and math in Boulder and Chicago, and worked as an archivist for the Missouri Botanical Garden, Laumier Sculpture Park and the St. Louis Science Museum.

Andrea developed medical difficulties that complicated her life. Barbara was fiercely devoted to helping Andrea prepare to live an active, independent and satisfying life. Together, Barbara and Andrea were wildly successful.

After retirement, Barbara and Jack moved with Andrea to Corvallis to join Lisa's family. Barbara volunteered for and served on the board of Greenbelt Land Trust. She also worked in the schools for Start Making a Reader Today (SMART), inspiring a new generation of book lovers. Barbara and Jack traveled far and wide, exploring Europe, Australia, New Zealand, South America, Africa, Turkey and Greece.

In 2008, Barbara told her doctor that things did not seem right. The day she

received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease, she said, "This stinks!" No one ever promised life would be fair, only that it would be worth it. Barbara found much that was worth it, even with the added trial of Alzheimer's.

Barbara traveled to see family and friends, went birding and fishing, and did trail maintenance and battled invasive species for Greenbelt. She walked the trails of Corvallis every day. Barbara met the test of Alzheimer's with a fierce determination to ward off its frailties, exercising relentlessly.

Throughout the last five years, she continued to enjoy challenging fiction and nonfiction, especially those that touched her interest in the land, like "Walden" and "Silent Spring." She seemed to have armored and stubbornly defended the sections of her brain devoted to the spoken and written word, even while other sectors were under siege from the disease.

Barbara's example of equanimity in the face of hardship will continue to inspire us. We had no idea we had so much left to learn from her. As we say goodbye to Barbara — wife, mom and grandma; scholar; scientist; naturalist; librarian; gardener; lover of books and ideas; and friend — we remember her watchwords: "Don't forget to be brash!"

Barbara is survived by her "beloved," Jack; her children and their families, Lisa Brown, Peter Mykrantz and his wife, Alethea, Andrea Mykrantz and her husband, Al Thiel, and John Mykrantz and his wife, Katy McAlister; her grandchildren, Nicholas Mykrantz, Patrick Brown, Seth McAlister Mykrantz, Wesley Mykrantz, Nathan Brown and Samuel McAlister Mykrantz; her sister, Janice Short; and dear friends. She joins her parents and her brother, Wesley.

A memorial will take place at 10 a.m. Friday, July 19, at First Presbyterian Church in Corvallis. Memorial contributions can be made to the Greenbelt

Land Trust, the Alzheimer's Association of Oregon or the Arc of Benton County.