



Karen Guzman

July 17, 1942 - October 16, 2012

Karen Kay Guzmán was born on July 17, 1942, in Portland, the daughter of Andrew J. and Katherine M. Rommen. With a Norwegian immigrant father and a first-generation Austrian-German mother, Karen was introduced to cultural diversity early in life, as she grew up in a home where both the German and Norwegian languages were spoken and cultures celebrated. In her early youth she especially embraced her Norwegian heritage, and participated in the Sons of Norway Lodge and its many activities.

Despite being an only child, Karen was not alone for long, as two cousins came to live with her family when she was 4. Growing up, Karen was very successful in school, earning good grades and participating in clubs and the pep rally squad. She also was very active in her church, particularly in Luther League. Trips to the beach were a popular family outing, and Karen became enamored of the Oregon Coast at a very early age.

Following high school, Karen continued her education at Pacific Lutheran University and completed a degree in education. Academic achievement was the norm for Karen, and she graduated with honors from PLU in 1964. Her first teaching assignment took her to Anchorage, Alaska, where she taught eighth-grade language arts/social studies for three years, and it was during this period that she met her future husband at a square dance. Karen left Alaska for Eugene in 1967. Newly married, she was now close to her family and the Oregon Coast once more.

While in Eugene, Karen continued her teaching career and started a family,

giving birth to a daughter. She visited the Oregon Coast on a regular basis and, of course, continued square dancing. Four years later, Karen followed her husband to Salem. Here, she involved herself in Oregon State University Extension Service activities, more square dancing, and church, where she joined a young couples' group and established some lifelong friendships. A second daughter was born in Salem, and Karen also began her master's degree. In 1974, only three years after arriving in Salem, Karen once again followed her husband, and moved the family to Corvallis.

Life in Corvallis allowed Karen to continue and finish her master's degree in English/literature. While being a mom was her primary focus, Karen was quick to become involved in church activities, parent education, square dancing and regular trips to the coast. She also taught and tutored at the local public schools and community college.

After five years in Corvallis, the family seized an opportunity to spend one year in Washington, D.C., so Karen again packed up the family wagon and moved everyone east.

Following the stay in the nation's capital, the family returned to Corvallis, and Karen thought she would return to teaching, only she discovered that her teaching certificate had expired. Rather than return to school for additional credits, Karen chose a completely different path and took a position with the OSU Federal Credit Union. She remained with OSUFCU until her retirement 22 years later.

Karen enjoyed working at the credit union, and she consistently rose through the ranks, earning multiple recognitions for outstanding performance. She was part of the leadership team that helped OSUFCU grow from one small building near campus to multiple branch offices throughout the mid-Willamette Valley. When she retired, Karen held the position of chief financial officer. Being a mom and wife always were Karen's priority, but she always found time for community activities, too: parent education classes; teaching vacation church school; regularly attending her favorite book club, Wise Women; membership in Rotary, where she served in various leadership positions; membership on

the Old Mill School Board; and membership in the Grace Church Foundation, where she served as treasurer and board member.

After retirement, Karen volunteered her time keeping books for the gift shop at Good Samaritan Hospital. Around the time of her retirement, Karen was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and dementia. These two conditions, while beginning to limit her physical and mental abilities, never limited her eagerness to help and become involved. She joined support groups and attended seminars related to her conditions, but also continued to focus on what she could do, taking exercise classes and even a variety of Latin dance classes. Nevertheless, her favorite pastimes never changed; she enjoyed her daily walks with her husband, reading and visiting the Oregon Coast.

Karen is survived by husband, Juan; daughters Juanita and Kristine; sister, Charlene; and her many in-laws, cousins, nieces and nephews from her extended family in Oregon, Texas and Norway. A memorial service for Karen will take place at 2 p.m. Friday, Oct. 26, at Grace Lutheran Church. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Grace Center for Adult Day Services (www.gracecenter-corvallis.org).

Tribute Wall



“Karen was interested in all things spiritual. I think she would pray that you all find comfort in each other and feel her ove that shines down upon you. 53

Libet Hatch - October 23, 2012 at 06:04 PM