



Virginia Fry Gross

March 31, 1920 - January 15, 2012

Our dearly loved mother slipped away peacefully on January 15, 2012 to join her true love.

Virginia's parents met and married as young missionaries in China. Unfortunately after less than 2 years of marriage, her father William Colby, passed away and was buried in the Province of Kansu before Virginia was born. Her mother, Louise, returned to the United States and Virginia was born in Santa Cruz, California in 1920.

When she was 8 years old, her mother married Arthur Fry who then legally adopted Virginia. Only one year later, the depression dealt the newly formed family a heavy financial blow and they struggled to keep the Baltimore Hotel in Los Angeles and June Lodge at June Lake in operation. Virginia spent many happy summers at June Lake where she learned to appreciate the splendor of nature and enjoyed hiking, fishing and horseback riding.

Education was always important to Virginia (known as Ginny to her friends) and although the family moved frequently, she excelled in school even skipping a few grades. She attended UCLA for 3 years then went directly into USC Law School. It was here in September 1943 she met her true love, William Gross (Bill), who was recently discharged from the Army. They married on December 19 of the same year, spent their honeymoon studying

for finals and set up housekeeping in Hollywood, California.

Virginia chose having a family over a legal career and the happy couple had three daughters. Looking for a better environment to raise their children they left the Los Angeles area and made Santa Barbara their new home in 1956. Several years later their fourth daughter was born.

Over the years, she focused on home, family, friends and service. She and Bill spent many years remodeling their home to accommodate the growing family which included caring for older relatives. They made very close, lifelong friends wherever they went. Ginny became an avid gardener and never lost her love of plants and flowers. She volunteered for many organizations and was dedicated to assisting others whenever she could.

Both Bill and Ginny loved reading and learning. Sharing books and ideas was an important cornerstone in their lives and one passed on to all their daughters. Ginny was compelled to return to school in her later years and in 1980 graduated from the University of California, Santa Barbara with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

Ginny always enjoyed traveling and after the girls were grown she was able to make many trips abroad including Europe, South America and South Africa. When she was in her 50's, she even took up backpacking in her beloved Sierras with 2 of her daughters. The best was yet to come though. When Bill retired they bought a VW Vanagon Camper nicknamed Yellow Bird. For more than 10 years from spring until Christmas they explored the North American continent - east to west, Alaska to Florida. They enjoyed their adventures, meeting people and learning the history of the places they visited. They collected books to send home as souvenirs to be enjoyed again when they returned and sent letters filled with their enthusiasm of places newly discovered.

After accumulating over 250,000 miles on Yellow Bird, they adjusted to shorter trips and settled into the Valle Verde community. Ginny continued raising plants which she would pass along to her friends and neighbors. After Bill's death in 2006, she continued to do some more traveling. Revisited familiar places, saw some new ones and was able to visit family and friends. And of course, pick up new books.

Ginny is survived by her four daughters: Virginia Milhoan (John), Alexis Willey (Chuck),

Debbie Gross and Laura Murphy (Mike). Her beloved Yellow Bird now resides in Arizona with one of her daughters awaiting the continuation of more travel adventures. Virginia will always be remembered for her joyful enthusiasm of life, her courage and grace, the respect and dignity with which she treated others and her love of flowers.

Thank you so much Mom, it has been an honor to know you and a privilege to be your daughter.

Services will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to your favorite charity or plant a garden.