CONSTANCE PECK REPS

Constance Reps—"Connie" to her scores of friends—died from cancer on February 11, 2009 after a courageous battle that never broke her spirit or love of life, family, and friends.

She is survived by John, her husband of sixty years; her daughter, Martha of Denver, Colorado; son, Thomas (Susan Horwitz) of Madison, Wisconsin; sister, Marjorie Bolton of Grand Rapids, Michigan; two nieces; and several grand-nieces and nephews.

Her loss will be mourned by them and also by Connie's countless personal friends and the many others whose lives she touched while serving as a member and officer of Ithaca's organizations and as a volunteer in a variety of the city's civic and social activities.

Constance Peck Reps was born October 30, 1921 in Birmingham, Michigan. She graduated from Kalamazoo College magna cum laude in 1943 and then earned her MA from Brown University in French. In 1944 before a brief illness prevented her from continuing, she trained in Washington, D.C. as a cryptographer for the U.S. Army. She then began her teaching career at her alma mater in Kalamazoo, followed by her appointment as Assistant Professor of French at Drury College in Springfield, Missouri.

It was in Springfield, his boyhood home city, that she met her husband. After their marriage in 1948 she taught French at Triple Cities College (now Binghamton University) in Broome County where the two lived until going to England for a year when John became a Fulbright student at the London School of Economics.

In 1951 she and John moved to Ithaca when he joined the Cornell faculty. Three years later they built their home where they have lived ever since. After beginning their family Connie taught French at Boynton Junior High School and—until the school system created an in-school French program for grade-school children—she taught ten-year-olds in her home. She also taught adults for BOCES and for the Cornell Campus Club and later led English classes for foreign faculty wives who needed help with an unfamiliar language.

The earlier year abroad was followed by two year-long sabbatical stays in Europe for the Reps family and—later—four multi-month visits to Australia, and shorter trips to China and Hong Kong. Connie also enjoyed with John six carefully planned wine-tasting expeditions with three other Ithaca couples to France, Germany, Italy, California, Spain, and Portugal. Connie and her husband also took part in several two-week Elderhostel programs in England, France, and Greece as well as many others in the United States.

At their home in Ithaca Connie, her husband, and children welcomed a steadily-growing list of students to their home where they served as a host family for those coming to Cornell from foreign countries. Although many of these students from abroad were from France, others from Scotland, Germany, Austria, and Israel also joined the Reps family for holiday celebrations and other occasions. For several of them Connie became a surrogate mother or older sister.

These overseas guests were occasionally among the large number of good friends who joined Connie and John on the Reprise, the 27-foot sailboat on Lake Cayuga that for twenty-three years served as a family get-away but more often as a place where the two could entertain guests. This often began with a late-afternoon sail followed by Connie's delectable meals aboard, and later—if wind permitted—further sailing, talk, and warm companionship.

An active volunteer in the Ithaca community all her life, Connie served as president of the Ithaca chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), the Ithaca High School P.T.A., the Cornell Campus Club, and was the founding president and organizer of the Hangar Props, the support organization of the Hangar Theatre. As a fund raiser for the Props she organized and ran for more than 20 years the bus trips three times each season to performances of the Triple Cities Opera Company in Binghamton. During that period she also worked as a hospital auxiliary, and it was her voice that on her scheduled days answered the telephone and responded to personal inquiries at the reception desk.

Connie was a member of the boards of Historic Ithaca, the Cayuga Medical Center (formerly the Tompkins Community Hospital) Auxiliary, the Hangar Theatre, the Upstairs Gallery, the AF chapter of P.E.O., and the American Association of University Women that twice gave scholarships to the Educational Foundation in her name. She was honored at the Women's Federation ceremony for Women Making History, and the Hangar Theatre recognized her years of service and contributions with the Agda Osborn award.

For the last decade she chaired the art study group of AAUW. For its members she arranged for visits to local and regional museums, historic houses, or studios of artists or crafts persons. These trips provided opportunities for the group to be met by artists or curators and led on special tours of the studio or the collection. During the last years of her life Connie became an enthusiastic participant in programs at Lifelong. She enjoyed attending lectures there on literature and opera, and more recently she discovered the joy of painting and pottery in the two groups she attended regularly.

At her request there will be no funeral. A gathering for her family and friends to remember her life will be held at later time. Connie hoped that in lieu of flowers any donations in her memory would be directed to the Hangar Theatre, the AAUW Educational Fund, the Upstairs Gallery, the AF chapter of P.E.O. or Hospicare.