

Obituary as of October 6, 2019

Journal entry by Jim Russell — 13 hours ago

This is the October 7, 2019 version of Karen's obituary, which we expect to be sending out soon.

Karen May (Greenwood) Russell passed away on September 21, 2019 at 9:50 am at Aegis – Madison in Seattle, WA King County, the home of her daughter, Lynne Russell. Her passing was a peaceful end to a final passage of love after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.

Karen was born in Niagara Falls, N.Y to Leonard Kugel and Geraldine (Nevinger) Greenwood on the day her father ended his leave from the US. Navy to board his ship during WWII. After the war her parents settled down in Grand Rapids, Michigan, except when the family lived on the Kenosha, WI at the Recruit Training Command Great Lakes while Len was its Commander during the Korean War. When Karen returned to Grand Rapids, she began seventh grade at Ottawa Hills High School, graduating in 1959. There she forged lasting friendships and began her lifelong commitment to loving and serving in communities. She was active as a cheerleader, dancer, and member of the senior national honor society.

After graduation, her grandmother Cora Greenwood gave her \$1,000 to attend college saying, “If you enroll in college your father will find the money for you to graduate.” She attended Albion College where female students resided in dorms for four years. Nicknamed “Greener,” she and friends were counted on for sympathy and laughs for academic or boyfriend crises. Her song and dance routine of “Ma, He’s Kissing’ Me” was a great favorite at Kappa Delta or campus events and considered slightly naughty. She graduated in 1963 with a teaching degree for elementary and secondary education. At Albion she met and fell in love with James Sylvan Russell whom she married on November 29, 1963, and who remained by her side for 55 years until her death.

With her teaching degree, Karen taught for two years until Jim obtained his MBA. Afterward she devoted herself to raising their children at home and helping with neighborhood children whose mothers were employed outside their homes. She was an active volunteer often such as chair of Special Olympics events, President of Welcome Wagon, leader in church and performing in community theater, counseling on crisis help lines and perhaps, her most meaningful service – ten years as a Hospice volunteer.

Karen’s faith and love of dancing led her to create liturgical dance choirs in several churches and participate in community theaters in numerous roles in Muskegon, MI, Eugene, OR, and Wenatchee, WA. Her children have fond memories of sitting in the front row at theater rehearsals and of mom hosting many cast parties with wonderful creative people in her home. Among her proudest roles were in The Vagina Monologues, as Aunt Eller in Oklahoma, as a zombie dancing in shopping malls and main street during Halloween and as a sister in Arsenic and Old Lace in Wenatchee.

In Eugene, Oregon, Karen began a career in computer systems administration, continuing in Portland with several firms including Freightliner and finished her career as a consultant and trainer for Sun Microsystems administrators in the United States and Canada.

Karen and Jim retired in 2001 and moved to Wenatchee to indulge their love of the outdoors and community activities. She skied, danced, acted, hiked, climbed mountains despite acrophobia and traveled around the world. She served her church, community theater and, for several years, as the Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center. She and Jim were honored by the Women's Resource Center as the Campbell Humanitarians of the Year. In February 2018 they moved to Seattle to be closer to family.

Her artistic talents blossomed in retirement. She became a talented and creative weaver, using four looms to send custom designed table runners, napkins, place mats and towels for family members and friends. Whenever she found her body still, her hands moved to knit blankets, socks, wraps, and caps for family and friends.

Survivors include her husband Jim, children Lynne Russell and her sons, Henrik, Simon and Christoph Butz; Keith Russell and his wife Sheri (Ryszewski) and their children Alena and Maysee; Pam Bejerano and her husband Eduardo; brother Leonard K Greenwood, II and his wife Jackie, sister Candy McMullen and her husband Dennis. Surviving cousins include Marilyn Inman and Carol and Claudia Wiggins.

The family plans to have a celebration service in Wenatchee 1:00 pm on Saturday, October 26 at Trinity United Methodist Church in East Wenatchee. Memorial donations could be given to Hospice, First United Methodist or Bear Creek Methodist Church and the Wenatchee Valley Museum and Cultural Center

