

## Rena Anne Williamson 1921-2006

My earliest memories of mom go back to *Concordia*, the small town in north central Kansas where I was born- fuzzy grayscale memories mirroring the blandness of the Great Plains of mid 20th-century America.



Mom was the first person I remember (looking up from a crib) and only later, dad, in uniform at war's end in 1945. Later on still, I recall the way Mom held dad- and how it made me jealous. She was slender and erect then. But I didn't appreciate until much later the flowing gracefulness of her movements. Mom was perpetually in motion and dad, with love in his eyes- always watching.

Mom's hair was long and full then, untouched by frost and it fell softly across my face when she'd kiss me goodnight. She eased the fear of those night shadows that haunted my room. Never since have I felt so completely safe. Such was the power of our mothers love.

Charley was a roofer by trade back then, and we traveled with the Williamson clan and related families. Always on the move, like gypsies on wheels; we lived in trailer homes all over the south- Kansas, Texas, Louisiana, New Mexico...

It was a difficult time for Rena. I remember cramped trailers, arguments and mom's crying. But they always made up.

In '50 dad found a job with Boeing and got mom her first real home in Wichita- followed by more traveling (for Boeing this time) to Louisiana, Florida and finally in '56 to Merced California where all the pieces came together. Jim Drake was brought into the family then, and for a wonderfully long time the moving stopped. Rena and Charley, for the first time in their lives- put down roots.

Mom seemed always pregnant, and in my youthful ignorance I felt sorry for her (and of course a little jealous at my diminishing status as one among many). Merced was the happiest time of Rena's and Charley's lives- an idyllic time of raising a family and of church and friends. Faith and the social life that revolved around it was an essential part their lives- as was car camping in nearby Yosemite.

Jim, Bob and I grew up and began our married lives in Merced before setting out on our own. But over time fate drew all of us together again in Puget Sound. After dad died, Williamson Family life with Mom as the centerpiece continued in the Pacific Northwest. Rena's passing last week brings an end to an era in our family. And though we will go on- it will be tinged with sadness.

Two years ago in Inverness Scotland, Laveta, Sharon, Russ & I discovered a churchyard cemetery- some of the graves dating back to 1717. The inscription on one woman's tomb was particularly poignant. Engraved on her headstone in badly weathered and hard to read letters was this fragment of a sentence:

... "*and her loving memory, embalmed in the sorrowing hearts of her children*" ...

It was both strange and wonderful that after more than two centuries of sun, rain and nights as quiet as her grave, those barely discernable words engraved in stone still possessed the power to touch living hearts.

So it is today. We loved you mother. And from the sorrowing hearts of *your* children.... may you rest in peace.

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*My parting words at Rena's funeral,  
Everett, Washington, May 2006.*

-clw