

Ben's comments to the memorial service, 6 May 2011, at Tres Pinos church, near Hollister, California, for Dorothy Kerkvliet

Dorothy Mae Grasseschi Kerkvliet was a worker. As a teenager she worked in a dime store in Great Falls, Montana. (In today's terms, maybe we'd say "dollar store.") Over the years, she was a file clerk, typist, secretary, stenographer, and book keeper in Great Falls, Billings, and Helena, Montana; Santa Rosa, California; Kettering, Ohio; and Reno / Sparks, Nevada.

Dorothy Mae Grasseschi Kerkvliet was a daughter, the only child of Rhoda and Amerigo Grasseschi. Amerigo (better known as Spagg, short for spaghetti, due to his Italian roots), was a machinist for railroad companies and copper refineries in Montana and elsewhere. Rhoda was a seamstress of considerable renown in central Montana. In their advanced senior years, Dorothy looked after them.

Dorothy was a spouse. She and John Kerkvliet married on 19 December 1942 – she but 18 years old, he but 21 and a new volunteer in the U.S. Navy's Pacific fleet in the early months of World War II. They met through Great Falls High School class mates. They had been married 66 years when Dad died on 1 September 2008. Mom never recovered from her sadness.

Dorothy was a mother. She gave birth to four children: Ben in 1943, Joe in 1946, Becky in 1950, and Dale in 1954. Dorothy and John were strict and loving parents. They taught us kids to respect other people regardless of religious or political affiliations. Mom taught all four of us to cook, clean house, sew buttons on shirts, darn socks, do yard work, and grow vegetables. She helped us with our homework, was active in PTAs, was a cub scout and girl scout den mother several times, suffered through our music recitals, and cheered our sports teams.

Dorothy was a homemaker. With John, she made homes in nine towns and cities; she cooked three meals a day; regularly baked pies, cakes, and cookies from scratch; sewed clothes; took care of our pets when we forgot; washed and ironed clothes; did most of the grocery shopping; and managed our household finances.

Dorothy was a dancer and singer. She and John were square dancers – and she made most of their square dance outfits. She sang in choruses and choirs and for years was in Sweet Adelines. She was also a pretty good oil paint artist.

Dorothy Mae Grasseschi Kerkvliet died last Sunday. I think she died a satisfied but also a sad lady. She was satisfied with her accomplishments. But she was sad to be widowed and to have lived to see her daughter Becky die.

I close with a passage from remarks her eldest grandchild, Brian (my son), sent in an e-mail together with regrets that he and his family could not be at today's service. Brian wrote, "In this world that is getting crazier and crazier I reflect on the simpler life that Grandma Dot and Grandpa John shared with us. She may not agree that she had it simpler, but we can see the beauty in the life she was able to lead compared to the world we see our kids entering. She was a steady mother, grandmother, and anchor for the family. She was an inspiration in many ways for those holding families together and who like to work with their hands

knitting, sewing, painting, cooking, planning events or remembering everyone's birthday....
Grandma Dot will be fondly remembered in my heart and dearly missed by all who knew
her."