



Margaretha "Gretel" Dodge

October 23, 2016

Margaretha "Gretel" Dodge died peacefully at home on Sunday, October 23rd surrounded by her family and weeks shy of her 87th birthday. Gretel, the daughter of the late Gotthold Gerbert and Helene Gebhardt Gerbert was born in Mannheim Germany on November 17th, 1929. The youngest of two daughters, Gretel was predeceased by her older sister Dr. Doris Gerbert. Gretel remembered her childhood as one filled with music and love. She idolized her maternal grandmother who was a businesswoman and the first female member of the Mannheim City Council.

Life changed dramatically with the onset of World War II. Gretel revered her father who died when she was only 13. Her later business career was fueled by her commitment to carry on the Gerbert name. Gretel, her mother and sister relocated to a small village outside Heidelberg, Germany where Gretel attended Gymnasium and University. Gretel also worked while studying to provide for her mother and help her sister attend medical school. Her early business experience was telling as she survived by dealing in the black market, which she thought was adventurous. Gretel earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1951 from Heidelberg University where she studied ballet, drama and opera. She spent one year performing with the German State Opera in Dettmold. In 1952 while subbing for her roommate who worked at the Allied Forces Officers Club in Heidelberg, Gretel met Captain Arthur Dodge, the man who would eventually, after much hard work and hundreds of

letters, become her husband. Prior to her marriage, Gretel worked at the Hotel Europaischer Hof as an Ass't Manager hosting statesmen and dignitaries such as Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower. Gretel resisted but ultimately surrendered to Arthur's persistence and they were married in December 1954, after which she relocated to Arthur's hometown, Lancaster, PA.

Arriving in Lancaster in the 1950's as a German national was no easy task. Gretel addressed Lancaster with the same elegance, sophistication, guts and determination that marked the remainder of her life. She gave birth to two sons, Arthur III in 1956 and Andrew in 1958. She had joined the Junior League of Lancaster ascending to leadership positions within the organization. She was well known in the early 1970's for leading the Junior League's annual Christmas Around the Tree event at the former Williamson estate. She also joined the St. Joseph's Hospital (now Lancaster Regional) Auxiliary where she learned retailing skills managing the gift shop. She bought and resold Amish quilts which she marketed in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. This all led to her starting her own business, the Cork Corner Factory Store on Shippen St. Her love for Martha's Vineyard off the coast of Massachusetts inspired the opening of the Cork Corner of Edgartown which remained vibrant until the late 1990's. She and Arthur traveled frequently to Sea Island, GA to inhale sea air, imbibe in vintage reds and imprint their love for one another on the Georgia coastline. Of course, she drove the entire 13 hour trip while simultaneously yelling at Arthur and any unlucky motorist who crossed her path on the highway. In the early 1980's Gretel took over a small natural cork importation and distribution business from Dodge Cork Co. her husband's business. She later renamed the company Gerbert Ltd. which with the help of her son Andrew grew into a leading US, woman owned cork and commercial floor covering distributor.

Gretel was tireless and a serial entrepreneur, She loved her family, her businesses and the Lancaster Community. Gretel was a devout Catholic her

entire life. She was an anonymous benefactor to local charities and St. Jude's Children's Hospital. She continued to work daily until she became ill in July of this year. A cancer survivor, she remained devoted to her employees and her health building a corporate gym and hiring a weekly trainer. Recently, she began Tai Chi lessons proclaiming, "I never really knew how to walk correctly" at 85. Gretel was a perfectionist, she hated borrowing money, but retained an impish sense of humor. Anyone who knew her can never forget her.

Gretel is survived by her sons Arthur III and Andrew both of Lancaster, their wives Justina and Lorraine; six grandchildren, Marc (Dublin, Ireland), Natalie and Emilie (New York City), Alexandra, Sabrina, Hayden; two step granddaughters, Camilla and Sloane Grover-Dodge and her beloved rescue dog Sophie. She was pre-deceased by her husband and best friend, Arthur B. Dodge, Jr. The family would also like to thank Gretel's primary care givers during the past three months, Cindy Landis, Sheri Hershey and Wanda Rubio.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend a Funeral Service with a Requiem Mass on Tuesday, November 1, 2016 at 10:30 a.m. at St. James Episcopal Church, 119 N. Duke Street, Lancaster, PA, with The Reverend David W. Peck Celebrant and The Right Reverend Peter D. Eaton Preacher. The family will greet friends from 9:30 a.m. until time of service. Private family interment in Lancaster Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made in Margaretha's name to Hospice & Community Care, PO Box 4125, Lancaster, PA 17604-4125 or www.hospicecommunity.org.

Cemetery Details

Lancaster Cemetery

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 1. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

St. James Episcopal Church
119 N. Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Service

NOV 1. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

St. James Episcopal Church
119 N. Duke Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Tribute Wall



“ *Margaretha "Gretel" Dodge*

October 22, 2023 at 11:34 PM



“ *Judy and I will always remember Gretel's dedication to church, family and business. She was so attentive to Arthur's church needs, faithfully delivering and collecting Arthur at St. James' Sunday services in the days he had mobility limitations. She shall be missed.*

With sympathies and prayers to the Dodge family, Judy and Paul Ware

Paul W Ware - November 05, 2016 at 10:45 AM



“ *Bountiful Rose Basket was purchased for the family of Margaretha "Gretel" Dodge.*



November 01, 2016 at 06:28 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Margaretha "Gretel" Dodge.*



October 31, 2016 at 11:34 AM

Bill
Sawdey

“*Mrs. Dodge was by far one of my toughest, yet appreciative customers I've had in my 33 years of transportation. Many of her phone calls come to mind....always starting with "Bill...this is Gretel Dodge...". It meant, stop whatever you are doing and help me solve a situation. She always took a moment to greet me when I stopped by on my monthly calls. I will miss this amazing woman.... Bill Sawdey*

Bill Sawdey - October 30, 2016 at 06:51 AM

JC

“*I didn't know Gretel well but was in her presence several times. You could see that she was a Strong & Powerful women but with a softness that would draw you in. She made you want to be a better person. I am so sorry for your lose. You will all be in my thoughts and prays. Know that she is looking down on you all with love.*



Jolene Cardwell

Jolene Cardwell - October 26, 2016 at 11:39 AM

“ Die Gretel

*Was the mother of my first love
My brother and Arthur cautioned me before we met
She is "Formidable, demonstrative, strong willed, sophisticated and
GERMAN"*

*I was the antithesis of all of these qualities at seventeen
Shy, insecure, unworldly, and mid-western
I was terrified*

*Yet within the first hour of speaking with Gretel
I sensed the depth and emotional complexity of this beautiful
woman and I was infused with empathy*

*I shyly uttered "coming to a place like this (Lancaster- so very
American and insular)
Must have been very hard for you as a young German woman after
the war with a Yanks baby
who spoke only German- baby German but German nonetheless."*

*When I said that- Gretel burst into tears and said " you are the first
person to ever say that to me" from that moment on our bond grew
exponentially.*

*Gretel had seen and lived through so much as a young woman I
could not even imagine how difficult her life had been up to this
point. I began studying German and the politics of Germany at
college.*

*I must say that part of my motivation came from wanting to
understand Gretel. I went on to get a Ph.D. and I currently teach
German politics. I very much owe the debt of my interest and
motivation to Gretel. The more I understood of the culture, language
and history of Germany, the more remarkable Gretel became to me.
I understood how important her boys were to her as they are to all
mothers but particularly to German mothers for whom kinder, kirche*

and Kuchen were the norm, as much as Gretel embraced those traditional German values with love and absolute devotion, she was herself coming of age in a new country- and a new America of the 1950's 60's and when I met her in the 1970's with "women's lib" and Betty Freidan and Gloria Steinman.

Gretel demurely took on some seemingly traditional roles outside the home that were still acceptable, volunteer work with the Lancaster Junior League and the Lancaster hospital gift shop where her innate tastefulness and business savvy became apparent to many. When she explored the idea of a little "factory store" for some cork products, her dear husband, Arthur (whom I adored) pat her in the back and said sure, why not. My father a Wharton School Economist, upon meeting Gretel and hearing of her "little idea," said,, mark my words, that woman will be a hugely successful entrepreneur." The rest as they say is history.

You all know that Gretel by now. Many of you were employed by Gretel who generously provided employment to friends in the community who then excelled thanks to her confidence in them and the support she provided.

Many of you also know the philanthropic Gretel's great generosity. It is legendary. What you might not know is the depth of feeling Gretel had for her friends. She was one of the most loyal and committed friends I have ever known. Long after both Art and Andrew were off to California and the U.K., Gretel's devotion to our friendship never waivered. I could go years without seeing my college chums Artie and Andrew yet Gretel and I would always be in touch. I valued her friendship so deeply and it was always reciprocated. From the time I had my son, Roan, often at parties at the Lancaster Country Club strictly for adults and only the Dodge families' children, folks would wonder "who is that little boy. Which one of her grandsons is he"

Gretel always made us feel special and a part of the family. As many of you here experienced as well so you'll know exactly what I mean when I say, "Gretel's face would light up upon seeing you like no one else was as important to her." Mine, I must say did the same

because for me, there wasn't anyone more important to my coming of age as a woman and mother than my dear elegant, brilliant, loving, compassionate friend, Gretel. I shall miss her terribly but she will live on in all the traditions she shared with me that are so much a part of my own life now.

Dr.Christianna Leahy - October 26, 2016 at 11:37 AM

JC

“*My whole family will miss her dearly. She was witty and kind. My grandma Virginia King has moved in with me here in Ga otherwise she would have been at the funeral. Our hearts go out to you Arthur and Andrew. The Kline family*

Julie Cutshall - October 26, 2016 at 10:20 AM