

## Irene Kahn 1926 - 2010

Irene had a long and generous career which included teaching many and varied arts and crafts to appreciative adults in many communities, including ten years at California Community Homes (formerly Christian Church Homes of California), which is the parent organization that operates Strawberry Creek Lodge, where she lived the last 18 years of her life.

Her free and open spirit saw God in many places. She stayed connected to her Jewish ancestry throughout her life, belonged to Buddhist Sanghas (Wednesday and Thursday Night Meditation Communities in Berkeley), and immensely enjoyed Spirit Rock Retreat Center in Marin. She began attending Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting around April 2002, and identified with Quaker Friends when asked by hospital staff.

Continuously surrounded by her family and many cherished friends during her final two week hospitalization for leukemia, Irene passed on March 8, 2010 in Oakland, California at Kaiser Hospital. She is survived by her older sister Beatrice Vlodkowsky; her four children, Graham, Owen, Paul, and Nancy; daughter-in-law Tracy Johnson; Nancy's partner Will Harden; former husband Flewid (Warren) Kahn; beloved nieces Diane Kullen and husband Alan Kullen, Paula Vlodkowsky, Harriet Halpern and husband Dave Halpern; nephews Bob and Don Klein and their wives Joanne and Dodie; great nephews Dylan, Lucas and Jesse Klein, Todd Kullen, Robert, Michael and Daniel Halpern; great niece Allison Chase; grandchildren Michael and Noam Rosen Grace; Marley Van Deusen, and Jacob and Jeremy Harden; cousins, extended family members and cherished friends.



*Irene was the spark that lit many of our fires.  
She embodied spirit and encouragement and risk and creativity.  
It didn't matter if you were her kin, her friend, or a passerby.  
She would look you square in the face, and let you know  
there was no better thing than to "Love yourself!"*

*Irene would be the first one to make sure we celebrate  
the passing of her spirit into a better place. She showed us all  
what was important in life, how to sort through the priorities  
and understand the deeper truth of what lies within.  
Our family will always cherish our beloved Irene for the bounty of love  
and wisdom she gave us all, and her ability to offer us her full presence.  
- from Irene Kahn's family*

*Meeting for Worship on the Occasion of  
Celebrating the Life of Irene Kahn*

*3pm Sunday April 11, 2010      Berkeley Friends Church*

*A Quaker Memorial Meeting follows the same form as a Meeting for Worship, which is the core of Quaker Practice.*

*As a community who knew Irene Kahn, today we gather in silence to remember and celebrate her life. We come in both sadness and thanksgiving to share our memories, thoughts and feelings. Friends believe that there is that of God in everyone. We seek to mark that of God that lived in Irene and to affirm those things we now carry with us.*

*If you have arrived early, please help us prepare the room for worship by remaining silent.*

*The responsibility for the spiritual depth of the meeting rests with each attender. Those who keep silence as well as those who give a vocal message do their part when they yield their minds and hearts to the guidance of the Spirit.*

*As we sit in expectant quiet, we may be moved by the Spirit to share a message. Please do so without undue length, being mindful that others may be so moved. Everyone participates equally and all are welcome to speak. You may be moved to share prayers, poems, anecdotes or song. Please allow a few moments to hear and reflect on each message before offering yours.*

*We will worship together for about an hour. The clerk will close our time of worship by shaking hands with those next to her, a signal to all of us to shake hands with those nearby. After this memorial meeting, we will join in fellowship upstairs.*

Born in 1926 in New York City to a Russian (Lithuanian) Jewish father and a German Jewish mother, Irene was the youngest of two daughters. A self-starter, Irene attended Queens College part time for many years, prior to earning her college degree from New York Empire State College. She was a dynamo of energy, creatively expressing herself as a ceramicist and artist of unique skill and style. Her home in Queens, New York was a virtual gallery of her work. When she moved to California, she kept up her work, papering her wall with the artistry and wisdom of her paintings.

Irene was a devoted Mother, and family (both nuclear and beyond) was always a very important part of her life. After moving to California, she continued to stay connected with cherished relatives who lived back east. She was affectionately regarded as the family historian.

She was an avid outdoor explorer, driving along the back roads of the Bay Area, and adventuring out on all types of trips that included white-water rafting, camping in Yellowstone Park, Spirit Rock Retreats, hiking in Muir Woods and Point Reyes, and countless others.

Irene's spirit triumphed over the physical pain she experienced during the last years of her life (her legs, ribs and pelvis were severely injured when hit by a van while walking across the street). Even after her accident, she would take herself to Lake Anza or to one of her various indoor pools in Berkeley and swim in all kinds of weather. When she was no longer able to venture out to her favorite get-away spots, Irene continued her zest for adventure and living life fully through her abundant friendships and strong connections with her community groups.