

Memorial Minute

Renate von Koenigsloew, 1918 -2003

RENATE VON KOENIGSLOEW, a long and faithful member of the Edmonton Monthly Meeting, Religious Society of Friends, died on January 20, 2003 in Edmonton. A Memorial Meeting for Worship to celebrate her life was held on January 31, 2003.

Renate von Koenigsloew, née Emma Renate Blunck, was born on April 20, 1918 in Hamburg, Germany. She and her twin brother were the youngest of five children of the well-established Blunck family. Her father, a prominent lawyer in Hamburg, was for a brief period of time Minister of Justice in the Weimar Republic, the democratic government of Germany in the 1920s.

Renate entered the nursing profession, receiving her education as a pediatric nurse in Jena, where she met her husband, Erich, a physician. They were married on November 25, 1939 in Hamburg.

During World War II, Renate lived near Hamburg, an area that was heavily bombed. There she raised five children, all born during the war period or shortly thereafter. She continued to live in the neighborhood of Hamburg until 1960 when she and four of her children immigrated to Canada, where they joined her husband and their son who had come to Canada earlier. The family settled in Edmonton.

One of Renate's passions was music, and this always played a very important role in her life. Renate had a good voice and enjoyed singing. While she lived in Germany, she sang in a church choir. When she moved to Edmonton, she joined the Richard Eaton Singers and became an active member of the Chamber Music Society. She missed Germany, and her participation in musical activities helped her overcome her initial homesickness. She served on the board of the Chamber Music Society and for twenty years was the historian for the Society. Renate also played a major role in bringing to Edmonton the Suzuki program of music education for young children.

A very determined and energetic woman, Renate, also undertook to further her education. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree and then a Master of Arts degree in Germanic Languages from the University of Alberta and taught in the German department until she retired.

Renate had another passionate concern - the need for peace in our world. She was raised in the Lutheran Church and, during the Nazi period in Germany, she joined with those who, in 1934, formed the Confessing Church, of which Martin Niemoeller and Dietrich Bonhoeffer were leaders. This was the centre of German Protestant resistance to the Nazi regime. In the second half of the sixties, she started attending worship meetings of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Edmonton, and she joined the Society in 1969. She contributed much to the Edmonton Monthly Meeting of the Society, serving as treasurer, then librarian and in 1983, 1984 and 1985 as Clerk. Renate and her husband were members of the Physicians Against Nuclear War, and with another member of the Edmonton Meeting, she worked with the international Beyond War movement. Until the time of her second massive stroke in the early 1990s, she attended Meetings for Worship faithfully. After her move to a long term care facility, members of the Edmonton Monthly Meeting met with her for worship in the afternoon of the first Sunday of each month..

Renate was an individual who had a strong faith in God, and her service to others and her peace work were based on this faith in the in-dwelling spirit of God in her life. While we mourn the loss of our friend, Renate, we can all be truly thankful that we were able to share in her life. As well as many friends, Renate leaves her five children, eight grandchildren and one great-grandchild. □