



Mary Ayleen Hilt

December 26, 1910 - January 10, 2015

Mary Ayleen Dresser Hilt died Saturday, January 10, 2015, at Lemay Avenue Health and Rehab Facility in Fort Collins. She was 104 years old. Ayleen was born December 26, 1910, to Walter Joseph Dresser and Mary Ayleen Richardson Dresser in Montreal, Canada. She was known as “topey” or “toe” by her family and close friends. The nickname came from her father calling her “my little toe,” when she was a toddler because she liked the “This Little Piggy Went to Market...” story so much. Ayleen grew up in Montreal, with brief residencies in New York, Florida, New Orleans and Ohio, while her father sought employment during the Depression. Living in the French-Canadian province of Quebec, she learned French as a second language.

After high school graduation in 1932, Ayleen enrolled in the Royal Victoria Hospital nursing school. Registered nurse’s training was three full years, with no time-off for holidays and summer vacations. Emphasis was on students learning by doing during 12- and 14-hour shifts on patient wards. Following her patient ward shifts, Ayleen attended lecture and lab classes and studied. The field of medicine and being a nurse suited her; and she was good at it. The world-renowned Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill University and Montreal Neurological Hospital were founded by Dr. Wilder Penfield in 1935. Ayleen was one of two nurses from her graduating class chosen by Dr. Penfield to assist in surgeries and care for patients with epilepsy at the Institute. (Dr. Penfield’s research has had a major influence on the treatment of epilepsy, and some of his surgical procedures are still used by

neurosurgeons.)

WWII began in 1939 and Ayleen planned to join the Royal Victoria Hospital unit going overseas to serve during the war. Those plans were changed by an unexpected appendectomy for her, followed by recovery time spent at her relatives' home in historic Appomattox, Virginia. There she met Charles Hilt, the local high school coach and the town's most eligible bachelor. After a two-week courtship, they married. Ayleen went from having a small family of one sister and parents, living in the cosmopolitan city of Montreal to an in-law family of six brothers and sisters, living in the peaceful mountains of southeast Virginia.

Ayleen and Charles moved to Greeneville, Tennessee, where Charles began his career with the Pet Milk Co. A daughter, Ayleen Elizabeth, was born in 1941. They lived in Fremont and Bryan, Ohio, and St. Louis, Missouri, as the transfers came along with promotions for Charles.

In 1963 Charles died. Ayleen became a U.S. citizen and returned to nursing. She spent most of the next thirteen years of her professional life in charge of the well-baby clinic at Mount Carmel Hospital in Columbus, Ohio. Following her retirement, she joined her daughter and son-in-law where they were living in Edina, Minnesota. Subsequently, she moved with them to Newtown Square, suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and in 1992 to Fort Collins, Colorado. Ayleen was a voracious reader. She also liked to sew, crochet, knit, cook for family and friends and take care of the family standard poodles and Saint Bernard. Crossword puzzles were a long-time interest—as she would say, she had been “doing them since they were invented!” When her granddaughter, Jessica, at seven years old arrived from South Korea, she became, “Granny,” and thus, began their life-long closeness and “palship.”

In addition to her daughter and son-in-law, Ayleen E. and Denver Burns (Fort Collins, CO), and granddaughter, Jessica J.S. Burns (Seattle, Washington), she is survived by a sister, Dee Sancton (Dorothy Delia) age 98, living in Montreal, Canada; a nephew, Richard and his wife, Christine Sancton (St. John, New Brunswick, Canada) and their children and grandchildren; and a

niece (Martha Jo Caldwell) and nephews (Fred Hackney, Blake Yost, Harry Yost, R.W. Hilt, Charles Hilt, Don Hilt and Ralph Hilt) and their families in Virginia, Michigan and North Carolina.

A private memorial service will be held at Lemay Avenue Health and Rehab Facility on January 30, 2015. Following a family graveside service, Ayleen's ashes will be buried next to her husband's grave on a mountainside outside Tannersville, Virginia.

For anyone who wishes, in lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution in Ayleen Hilt's name for nursing education through the Columbine Health System's Geriatric Education Centre Scholarship Fund, c/o Columbine Health Systems, 802 W. Drake Rd., Suite 101, Fort Collins, CO, 80526. Please note donations to this fund are not tax deductible.

Tribute Wall



“ *Mary Ayleen Hilt*

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM



“ *Denver and Alyeen: Thinking of you at this time and sharing in your loss. Martha Pforr*

Martha Pforr - January 29, 2015 at 09:02 PM



“ *Chrissy McCollom lit a candle in memory of Mary Ayleen Hilt*



Chrissy McCollom - January 26, 2015 at 01:46 PM