

# Transitions

*Births, marriages and deaths*

## Sophia Herzog Sachs succumbs to rare disease

Sophia Herzog Sachs, the Palo Alto girl with a metabolic genetic disorder that inspired a new program of care for terminally ill children and their families, died July 25.

Sophia, 4, struggled with Neimann-Pick Type A disease, a fatal disorder that leaves cognitive functions intact, but affects the autonomic functions. She was one of only eight children in the world afflicted with the disease. A story about Sophia was chronicled in the Weekly in May 2003.

Children with Neimann-Pick Type A disease do not grow normally or live beyond 2 to 3 years. Sophia was diagnosed with the illness when she was 8 months old, but as a testament to her spirit, she defied the odds and lived one year beyond life expectancy.

"I hope to carry her light forward. She had a horrible disease, but she had a big mission," her mother Karen Herzog said.

Nearly 500 people from all walks of life were drawn to volunteer thousands of hours to care for her and to offer support for her family. Sophia's Garden Foundation for supporting terminally ill and severely disabled children and their families grew out of Sophia's care. It involves creating all-inclusive, community-based support, which includes core principles of compassion, collaboration, creativity, community and hope. "This is Sophia's legacy into the future," Herzog said.

Sophia was unable to speak, swallow or walk, but she learned to create art, make a Tibetan prayer flag and attend preschool at home with the help of her family and numerous friends. She expressed her fondness for the world with small gestures: she pulsed her hand to music; she giggled in her sleep — something she couldn't do while awake. She packed "a lifetime of relationships," into her four short years of life, Herzog said in a 2003 interview.

Once they met Sophia, people were immediately drawn to help. Neighbors, family, friends, hospice volunteers, medical personnel and synagogue members were drawn to help run errands, feed and care for Sophia in a constant stream of love. Neighbors created an organic garden to provide Sophia with organic vegetables. She inspired art, dance and music, including a music CD, Sophia's Garden. Proceeds from its sales go to the Sophia's Garden Foundation.

More than 100 people turned out in Greenmeadow Park for a Saturday ceremony honoring her spirit. As Tibetan prayer flags waved in the wind, they tossed coins into a "Well of Wishes" for needy children. A musician played Tibetan singing bowls, traditionally used to synchronize vibrations in the universe.

Friends and caretakers remembered Sophia's fondness for dogs and her crushes on older boys. Sophia enjoyed old musicals on television; she was particularly fond of Fred Astaire



*Sophia Herzog Sachs, as pictured in May, 2003*

Melvin Sachs of Sunnyvale; aunts Susan Herzog, Annalisa Herzog and Marion Sachs; uncles Eric Herzog, Paul Sachs and their families, including numerous cousins. A Web site memorial can be viewed at [www.vdg.net/memorial](http://www.vdg.net/memorial).

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Sophia's Garden Foundation, 520 El Capitan Place, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Contact through [donate@sophiasgarden.org](mailto:donate@sophiasgarden.org).

Obituaries are a free editorial service. Information should be submitted, typewritten, no later than 9 a.m. Wednesday for the following Wednesday's paper or 9 a.m. Wednesday for memorial service announcements in Friday's paper. Send to: Obituaries, Palo Alto Weekly, P.O. Box 1610, Palo Alto, CA 94302; fax to (650) 326-3928; or e-mail [editor@pawebly.com](mailto:editor@pawebly.com). Please include a contact name and telephone number. The Weekly reserves the right to edit obituaries for space and format considerations.

and Snoopy's Beatles, according to her mother.

At the Saturday remembrance, Sophia's parents and friends released monarch butterflies, fluttering toward the heavens.

Sophia is survived by her parents, Richard Sachs and Karen Herzog; her sister Lauren; grandmother Selma Sachs of Mountain View; grandfather

## Helen Rogoway

Helen Rogoway, 98, a resident of Palo Alto, died July 2.

She was born March 20, 1907, in Dallas, Texas. She moved to Spokane, Wash., at 6 months of age and graduated from the University of Washington in 1928.

She married Dr. Morris B. Rogoway on Jan. 24, 1929, and moved to Portland, Ore., where the couple

lived until 1972 when they moved to California. Her husband preceded her in death in 1992.

She is survived by her son, Bill, and daughter-in-law, Melba, of Portola Valley; and three grandchildren. The family would prefer memorial donations be made to Lytton Gardens Community Housing, 656 Lytton Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94301.

## DORIS C. OLSEN

Doris Olsen passed away on July 31, 2005 in Palo Alto. She was a longtime resident of the area.

Born in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota in 1914 to Florence Dovre Jensen and Rudolph Jensen, Doris graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul Minnesota and taught Kindergarden thru 3rd grade. She came out to visit her parents in Oakland, California and to attend the 1939 World's Fair on Treasure Island. She liked it so well that she remained in California and never returned to Minnesota.

Doris married Ernest Olsen in 1942 and they had one daughter. After Ernest passed away in 1957, she returned to work as the Director of the newly formed San Mateo County Bar Association's Lawyer's Reference Service. She headed this until her retirement in 1979. Not satisfied with staying home in her 70's Doris returned to work part-time for a legal firm in Menlo Park.

She loved to travel and managed to visit almost every spot she dreamed of seeing. She was a member of the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church and had many friends in the Prebyterian Women Club.

She is survived by her daughter, Cathy Norfleet and her granddaughter Shannon White, both of Palo Alto.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests any donations be made in her memory to the Salvation Army.

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