



Photo taken at Coyote Valley Reservation after Doris' burial in Coyote Valley cemetery

Doris Renick

Dec 31, 1922-Nov 11, 1999

A tribute from the editor

After Doris's death, the sky spoke of her passing. The day that her body was brought home to lie in honor, the sunset blazed with beautiful pastels. After her burial, magnificent black-and-white storm clouds formed. The next day, soft, cleansing rains and rainbows created a crisp brilliance that emphasized the beauty of the season.

I was struck by the sense that as the heavens opened to receive Doris' soul, those of us who loved her were showered with waves of grace. Our several days of vigil were marked by prayers, songs, services, eulogies, grieving, forgiveness, visions, dreams and healings. Friends of many faiths and spiritual paths converged to create ceremony and give witness to memories and stories that inspired us to open our hearts.

FRIENDSHIP

Doris was my next-door neighbor, my good friend, massage client and a fellow lover of life and God. Our relationship was special. Through the years, no matter what our state of mind or condition, spending time together was always healing and uplifting. We were so attuned to each other that I felt her call me when she needed help, and I seemed to know when to seek her company for a boost in spirit. Few visitors came to visit either of us without our wanting to share them with each other. At Doris's house, I met many *hilthen-matu* (Indian doctors), ministers, politicians,



medical people, business and legal associates, relatives, adopted relatives and friends. Her home was a place where all were welcome. If you came to my house, I probably took you next door to meet Doris on one or more occasions—to sing, share food, meditate, pray or just say hello.

SUPPORT

Doris was bedridden from a stroke and crippled from rheumatoid arthritis, but her mind and imagination were always alive. She loved conversation and especially enjoyed being read to. Doris was a captive audience for articles and poems prior to each printing of this magazine. If any reading lost her interest or she became unsettled, I knew that piece needed work. Her stamp of approval was clear when she made comments such as "This story is most wonderful," or "Oh my, I see so many pictures in my mind," or "That story reminds me of what our shamans taught." Doris encouraged me in this publishing project from the beginning—by helping me brainstorm and sell ads, and by passing out magazines to the steady stream of friends who came to visit from near and far.

SYNCHRONICITIES

When Doris died, *Sojourn* had completed three years and was undergoing its rebirth as *Grace Millennium*. Little did I know that the theme of this thirteenth issue, death and renewal, would have such personal meaning for us.

Several synchronous events occurred in Doris's last days. The week before her death, a new great-granddaughter was born into the family, down the hospital hall from the room where Doris lay. This was very auspicious according to native tradition. In Arizona, Doris's adopted daughter Sandra had a waking vision in which she saw Doris fully restored and radiant, her eyes glowing, and her body no longer disfigured from arthritis. The night Doris' daughter Donna asked the creator for a sign whether her mother would die or recover, a good friend Jackie woke up with a message from Doris: "I am leaving." These and other visions led to decisions that allowed Doris a smooth and painless transition.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Although her accomplishments were impressive, Doris never dwelt in the past or asked for special recognition. Only after her passing did I become aware of the extent of her service.

A gathering of tribal members recalled her contributions, and Laney Fouse wrote an article that was published on the front page of the November 12, 1999 edition of the *Ukiah Daily Journal*:

Doris served as the Coyote Valley tribal administrator from 1976 until 1979 when she became vice-chair of the Tribal Council. In 1981, she was appointed its chairwoman, a position she held for fourteen years.

While serving as chairwoman, Doris was instrumental in getting the land base in Redwood Valley redesignated from a rancheria to what is now known as the Coyote Valley Reservation. This opened the door for her to obtain government housing for tribal members, and to have a recreation building constructed. In 1993 she realized her longtime dream—the opening of the Shodakai Coyote Valley Casino, which now provides jobs to more than 200 local community and tribal members.

Prior to becoming a tribal leader, Doris worked as a registered nurse in hospitals in California and Texas. Despite suffering from rheumatoid arthritis for more than forty years, she traveled extensively throughout the United States, and took a trip to China in the late 1980s. She never let her disability stand in the way of her goals. Doris was active at the state and national levels, was chairwoman of the California Council of Tribal Governments, and was involved in the California Elders program, the Consolidated Tribal Health Consortium, the California Indian Health Consortium and the Disability Board. She was also a member of the Native American Language Committee, Indian Health Services' Tribal Youth Committee, and the Mendocino County Economic Development Commission. Doris was an advocate for the Title IV Indian Education program and the bilingual/bicultural program. In addition, she received a grant to establish a three-year pilot program for juvenile justice in the courts.

Doris' family was notified that the U.S. Congress would be honoring her during their last session of the year. Her family and friends were also invited to attend the California State Senate's first session of the new millennium for a special thirty-minute break to honor her memory.



Photo of Doris provided by family. Other photos by Jerri-Jo Idarius.

Letting go

**I value the ephemeral living—
the flowers and fruit of summer,
the sunset, the sea, the passing storm.
I value the love of those who love me.
I value those I love, and
I value most the few
who take the time to see me.
I value the valor of the human spirit.
I value the process of
growth and evolution.
I value the moments of clarity and unity
I've experienced.
I value my teachers and helpers.
I value comfort, stability, change,
growth, possibility, the divine.
I value my power,
and the claiming of it.**

**Around me when I die
I would wish for a few well-loved souls
who will remember the best of me.
And fresh air and sunshine,
and the scent of flowers and fresh herbs.
The knowledge that my ashes
will be borne to sea—Atlantic and Pacific.
That no empty pontifications
haunt my departing soul,
only a little music and soft farewells;
that friends do something
worthwhile of themselves,
in my name.**

**To the extent that I can be with you,
I will be with you.
I will always be interested
in what happens next.**

by Carol Kohli