



Abbie Jane (White) Bakony

January 23, 1922 – December 8, 2013

Abbie Jane Bakony, known as “AJ” to many of her friends and “Skip” to her family, was born on January 23, 1922, the oldest child of Herald and Bula (Smith) White of Eugene, Oregon. Her parents were both descendent of pioneers to Oregon. She attended University High School (Eugene) and the University of Oregon where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa. At the time of her passing she had a saying pasted to her mirror that said “Phi, Beta, and Kappa are the initials of the Greek motto *Philosophia Biou Kubernetes*, or “Love of wisdom, the guide of life.””

She graduated in Romance Languages and went directly to a special school in Boulder, Colorado for intensive training in the Japanese language (during WWII) concurrently becoming a Navy Wave. Soon after the war she was sent to Tokyo to decipher war documents. She met a Canadian, Leo Bakony during the 2+ years she was in Tokyo. She learned to love the Japanese culture. When she returned to the United States she began a career with the Central Intelligence Agency and lived in Washington DC, Evanston, Illinois and Seattle, Washington with the agency. Her role was to interview people who had vital information for the United States. AJ married Leo Bakony in 1958 but their marriage only lasted 3 years. Leo was an economist and academic.

When she retired from the CIA in 1977 she was awarded for reaching the highest level in her agency that a woman had ever achieved. She subsequently became a real estate broker, and also taught English as a second language classes at Shoreline Community College. She was very involved with her church – the University Congregational Church of Christ on the U of W campus. The friends that she made and fellowship at UCC were a source of joy in her life.

In 1982 AJ decided to go back to Japan to teach oral English to Junior and Senior high school girls at Kobe College in Nishinomiya. She taught several hundred girls each term, and was kept very busy grading exams. She returned to the Seattle area in 1987, and enjoyed communications and visits from Japanese friends and students for more than a decade afterwards.

At age 70, with the help of her church, Abbie Jane Bakony “came out” to the world as a lesbian. From an early age she knew that her tendencies were different from others but she lived during a time that was totally intolerant of her sexual orientation. She became very active in gay rights in her later years and that helped her finally feel pride for her many lifetime achievements.

Laurie Perrett, niece 2/20/2014