



**D**orothy Merkel Burkart died of natural causes on September 26, 2009 at Mountain View Care Center in Bozeman, Montana. She was 94 years old. Dorothy was born August 1, 1915 in Fishtail, Montana to Orville, a ranch hand, and Esther (Lambert) Pace. Dorothy had two younger siblings, Barney and Beatrice (Bea). Shortly after Bea's birth, Esther died of pneumonia.

The children stayed with their maternal grandmother until the following year when Orville returned to his home state of Missouri and met his second wife, Susie. After a brief courtship and marriage, the couple returned to Montana to raise Barney and Dorothy. A son, James, soon joined the family. A year later, Susie and an infant daughter died during childbirth. Stricken with grief and unable to provide for his four young children, Orville placed Dorothy and Barney in the Montana Children's Home in Helena, Montana, for adoption. James was left with family in Missouri and Bea continued in the care of her maternal grandmother.

Within a short period, Dorothy and Barney were adopted by Susan and Herman Merkel of Geraldine, Montana. The Merkels provided a stable and loving environment for Dorothy and Barney. With their care and support, both children flourished. Active in athletics, Barney became a local sports hero. Dorothy excelled academically, graduating from Geraldine High School in 1933 as salutatorian. Shortly after graduation, Dorothy moved to Harlowton, where she met her future husband, Howard Foster. The couple married in 1934 and had two children, Jack and Eleanor.

During World War II, while Howard served in the U.S. Navy, Dorothy and the children lived in Bozeman where she worked in the office of the Milwaukee Railroad. Following the war, the family moved to Helena, where Howard owned and operated Neill Avenue Tire. Dorothy was employed as a secretary for the Montana Nurses Association for eleven years. Although busy raising two children, Dorothy found time for community activities. She was a member and president of the Business and Professional Women, a member of Sapphira Temple Daughters of the Nile where she served as Queen in 1958 and Josephine Hepner Chapter #89, Order of the Eastern Star. In 1965, lending proof to the axiom that life begins when the kids leave home and the dog dies -- Dorothy and Howard moved to Mesa, Arizona.

In retirement, Dorothy had a chance to develop her athletic acumen and, like her brother, became somewhat of a local sports celebrity when she won Arizona's State Shuffle Board Championship.

Dorothy and Howard later divorced and she later married Irwin Burkart. The couple resided in Sun Lakes, Arizona. Following Irwin's death, she remained in Sun Lakes until moving to Bozeman and Aspen Pointe in 2001. Three years later, she moved to the Mountain View Care Center. During her stay there, she developed many friendships with other residents, staff and volunteers. Two volunteer friends, Judy Hammond and Judy Arkwright, were very special to her. Gifted with a sharp wit, a caring and approachable manner, and the love of her many friends and family, Dorothy will be greatly missed.

Preceding her in death are her husbands, Howard and Irwin.; her brother and sister, Barney and Bea; her grandson, Scott Foster; and her half-brother, James Pace. Survivors include her children, Jack Foster (Jean) and Eleanor Truitt; her grandchildren, Laurie Tennant (John), Mike Foster, David Ness, Nikki Falgoust (Larry) and step-grandchildren, Brandi Mains (Shawn) and Maren Chan (Rodney). Others surviving are her sister-in-law, Pat Merkel; her great grandchildren, Aubrey, Megan and Trevor Tennant, Gus and Sawyer Ness, Landon and Lindsey Falgoust, Cash and Cade Mains; Cameron and Christopher Chan and special nieces, Ann Thompson (Ken) and Mary Sue Monteleone (Monty); and nephews Larry Merkel (Rita) and Patrick Merkel (Kay).

Memorial services will be held at 11 a.m. on Monday, October 5th at Dokken-Nelson Funeral Service. Internment of ashes will take place later in Harlowton, Montana.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Rocky Mountain Hospice, 301 Edelweiss Drive, Bozeman, Montana 59718 or Mountain View Care Center Employees Fund, 205 N. Tracy, Bozeman, Montana 59715.