



Mary Edna Kramer

April 6, 1928 - April 27, 2020

Mary Edna Karmner (nee Troyer) was born April 6, 1928 in Kempsville, Virginia, Norfolk County. She was the 9th child born to Katie Beiler Troyer and Emmanuel E. Troyer. They were Amish and Mary Edna's first language was Pennsylvania Deutsch (German). Her siblings were as follows: Rosa Viola, Ore E., Levi E., David E., Samuel E., Sarah Anne, William Paul, Edwin Leroy, Emmanuel Jr., and Martha Esther. A last baby girl Laura died at 3 days old. Mary Edna was preceded in death by all of her siblings except Paul, Emmanuel Jr., and Martha.

The Troyer family moved to Deep Creek after Emmanuel Troyer purchased 40 acres of farm land on the northern edge of the Great Dismal Swamp. This land had been part of the Lindsey Plantation during the slave era. In summertime when Mary Edna was 6 years old she and her brother Junior was 5 they herded 6-8 dairy cows down to the swamp to pasture. The children were not to return home until 3 p.m. and they gauged the time by the position of the sun. Edna and Junior entertained themselves playing on the site of an old saw mill. A discarded tin can serve dto hold lunch time milk which they milked from the small dairy herd. Later after bringin the cows home, older children Sam, Paul, and Sarah did the milking.

All the children were expected to work for the common good of the family and contribute monies earned to the family coffer. At age 14 Edna was responsible to clean and box eggs for 200 laying hens. The eggs were sold in Portsmouth where people were happy to buy them for 30 cents a dozen. This was around the end of World War II when there was a shortage of eggs and meat so the market was especially favorable for selling farm goods.

Emmanuel and Katie left the Amish church and became Mennonites when Edna was 5 years old. This decision was driven by Emmanuel's need for a farm truck which was forbidden by the Amish Church. Emmanuel was responsible in large part for the construction/building of the Deep Creek Mennonite Church on West Road.

On her 19th birthday in 1947 Mary Edna Troyer married William Daniel Kramer (Dan). Dan

Kramer's parents had moved to Deep Creek from their Mennonite community in Meadville, Pennsylvania. Eli D. Kramer, father of Dan Kramer, became bishop of the Deep Creek Mennonite Church. Dan Kramer had been a wayward son. He left Eastern Mennonite High School and joined the military. After an honorable discharge and reinstatement into membership in the Mennonite Church the way was clear for Dan to marry Edna Troyer. Edna's parents disapproved of the union and Katie did not attend the wedding. Now would Edna's parents allow the reception to be held in their home, a common practice at the time. This wedding took place on a April Sunday.

The newly weds settled into family life on West Road near both their parents. Dan eventually joined his uncle in a masonry/construction business: Kramer and Kramer Masonry. Five children were born over a 6-7 year period: Ruth, Marlyn, Lois, Esther, Deborah. In 1954 Edna and her dear sister Sarah Troyer-Tennefoss both were expecting babies. Sarah delivered first and died during childbirth along with the baby girl. Edna delivered a baby girl on the day of Sarah's funeral. This loss was heart breaking for Edna. She mourned the loss of her sister and the loss of Sarah's 5 motherless children. Still another grief was soon to come.

Edna was 28 years old with five young children when Dan, Edna's husband, abandoned the family without explanation. It would be difficult to overstate the level of devastation this brought to Edna and her children. It deepened her faith. However this event would be a wound and a defining factor throughout her entire life.

Over the course of time the church and generous Mennonites and family members supported Edna and her 5 children. Eventually Edna taught herself to type. She was responsible for typing church manuscripts for religious literature - - this included a weekly pamphlet titled: THE MESSENGER. Edna compiled the articles and made many choices regarding what went in the publication. In actual fact Edna was the editor of THE MESSENGER but this was preferred to keep quiet. To speak of it would be to acknowledge a powerful role for a woman. The publication went out to churches which had left the conference and served to help educate the new emerging group of non-conference Mennonites. Later, Edna would type books for the Mennonite Publishers, Rod and staff. The children often fell asleep at night to the sound of their mother typing or singing. If the house was quiet they might call out from their beds "Mama sing!"

Edna was largely self educated. She took English correspondence lessons to improve her writing skills and as mentioned, taught herself to type. Edna read about artificial respiration in the READERS DIGEST magazine. The procedure allowed her to revive her daughter Esther age 6, following a drowning incident: a happy family swim time that turned

suddenly grim.

Along the way two little boys needed a home. Edna took them in . She was paid for their care and they became part of the family. Now there were 7 children.

When Hope Mennonite Church relocated from Deep Creek, Virginia and started a new community in North Eastern Carolina, a desolate area of drained swamp land Edna moved her family with the group. She encouraged a pioneer attitude and work ethic as the community worked to build homes and clear land for gardens.

The children were older when Edna began work as a nurse's aide in a 40 bed hospital 14 miles from the Mennonite community. She became a much loved and admire "nurse".

Edna's energy and can-do spirit, her laughter, and native intelligence as well as certain unpredictability were know to all those she held dear. She was curious and creative. She could fix, mend, repair, discuss issues, solve a problem, and cure ills - - her open door policy allowed for friendship to flow into her life.

Three of the her five childred preceded Mary Edna in death: Esther Fay (Nov 2000), Marlyn James (June 2016), Ruth Naomi (Sept 2016). She is survived by her daughters Lois Kramer Cahall and her husband Jay Cahall of Greenwood, Delaware and Deborah Kramer and her husband Howard Einhorn of Oak Park, Illinois. Additional family members include 13 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

A last loving farewell, Mary Edna Kramer.

Cemetery Details

Tressler Menonite Church

Greenwood, DE 19950