**Betsy Anne McDonald**

(September 30 1920 – December 7, 2015)

Betsy Anne McDonald died on December 7, 2015, at the age of 95, from pancreatic cancer.  Our family wants to thank you all for your visits, cards, emails, and support during her illness. She touched and inspired many people in her long life, and we are grateful that she had the chance to hear from so many people what she meant to them.

Betsy was born to Smith and Blanche Hunt on September 30, 1920, in Iowa, and grew up in Lomita, California (now in LA), when it was a small town. She was the second of six siblings, Jack, Bob, (Effie Wi)Nona, Tom and (Charlotte) Arlene. She graduated from Berkeley with a major in Food Science in 1942, then served in the Navy until 1945. She was stationed in Oklahoma and Boston, where she met her husband, James E. McDonald, when she was his student in a meteorology class at MIT. They had their first child in 1945. They lived in Ames, Iowa, while James got his PhD in Meteorological Physics. The family grew to six children by 1953. After a living year in Chicago, they moved to Tucson in 1954.

It is impossible to begin to do justice to the many years Betsy spent raising six children, cooking meals every day, taking kids to music and dance lessons, attending performances and going to PTA meetings. She called it her first life project and did it with characteristic tireless energy and love. While raising the family, she helped found the Tucson Humanist group and organize the Junior Humanist Sunday School where she taught comparative religions.  She was active in civic groups including the League of Women Voters and the ACLU. She was named the Mother of the Year by the Tucson Daily Citizen in 1960, but this “picture-perfect mother” was moving toward great changes along with the world around her.

Through the ACLU, she helped defend young black men in the courts and began to see systemic racism at work, leading her into the fight for Black and Chicano civil rights. The Vietnam War radicalized her further, and she became convinced that she had to fight for radical social change. This became what she called her second life project, eventually as a member of the Socialist Workers Party. In the 1960s and early 70s in Tucson, she helped found and run the Tucson Peace and Freedom Association and Venceremos Press (and trained herself to run an offset printing press). As a member of the SWP, she was a civil rights, labor, and antiwar activist in several cities, including Phoenix, San Francisco, Portland and Los Angeles. She went to work in an industrial job in her early 60s and continued into her early 70s. She returned to Tucson and remained politically active until the end of her life, particularly in the local immigrant rights movement.

Betsy pursued everything in her life with energy, love and selflessness. She had a strong sense of justice, and the stubbornness and courage to take difficult stands.  She pursued learning and study throughout her life, and often had a book in hand, filled with notes and underlined highlights. She was optimistic about the future, and believed strongly in the importance and goodness of ordinary people. This was not an abstract or intellectual belief; it was clear in her radiant smile, her warmth and her interest in everyone she met. She was an inspiration to many people, and to family members always a strong and loving presence. She will be missed!

Betsy is survived by her sister Arlene Skinner; children Kirk, Roni, Lee, Nancy, Gail and Jan; grandchildren Kalani, Alex, Owen, Terra, Ira and Ian; great-grandchildren Ambre, Olivia, Nasir, Nailah; and extended family members Nancy Schaefer, Allen Tollin, Brian Peters, Xiong Thao, Poh Lin Tan, and Willie Cotton.

**A celebration of Betsy McDonald’s life will be held on Sunday, January 3, 2016,**

**2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., at the San Pedro Chapel, 5230 E. Ft. Lowell Road, Tucson, Arizona.
We invite you to share memories and stories at the celebration. No RSVP is required**.