BARBARA MERY BENNETT OAKIE

October 11, 1913 - June 14, 2008

Barbara was born in Chico, California, her father and mother both of pioneer Chico families. The Merys and the Bennetts were pillars of the community and contemporaries of John Bidwell, founder of Chico. Barbara and her two sisters grew up in a gentle age, learning the manners of gentlewomen but at the same time, being equipped for life as a "new age" woman. She attended Chico State, at that time a junior college, then went on to the University of California at Berkeley, graduating in May of 1934, gaining not only a diploma but the acquaintance of her soon-to-be partner in life, John H.Oakie. They were married in 1936 and set up house-keeping in San Francisco, where John (also a Cal grad) had been retained as an expert in Pacific Rim affairs.

The outbreak of WWII disrupted their lives to the extent that they made the move to Grass Valley, buying property on McCourtney Road, harvesting pears, raising cattle, selling cream and eggs and raising children. Son John was born in 1940, daughter Katherine in 1942 and daughter Sarah in 1947. In 1953 they purchased the Barnegat Ranch on Spenceville Road in Penn Valley, and John Oakie became known throughout the north state for his innovative approach to animal husbandry and his devotion to the county's education system, serving as the chairman of the Nevada Union High School Board at the time of its inception and the building of the Ridge Road plant.

John's untimely passing in 1962 at the age of 51 left a void in Barbara's life that she sought to fill with loyalty and devotion to her family and her friends. She moved to Pasadena, CA; welcomed into the home of one of her sisters as she began her new life. She went to work as a Social Service supervisor for the County of Los Angeles and took the first of her many trips abroad, to Europe. She was a tireless traveler, ready to go anywhere, anytime at the drop of a hat, covering 49 US states and almost every continent. Her last trip out of the US was at the age of 92, when she hosted a trip to Japan for her son John and his wife Sandie, showing them sights that she had discovered in prior trips. Her last year was spent on Lopez Island, Washington in the home of daughter Sarah and son-in-law Lawrence Eppenbach, with daughter Katherine Marsh also attending her. Barbara leaves 5 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

There is no one who did not love her; there is no one who will not miss her. She touched the lives of many and we are all the better for it.

In keeping with Barbara's wish there will be no ceremony; interment will be in the Clear Creek cemetery, alongside her husband, parents and sisters.