

## Angela G. Dorenkamp(1929 - 2013)



Dr. Angela G. Dorenkamp, 83

Worcester - Angela Gloria (Donati) Dorenkamp, 83, died suddenly on April 20, 2013 at the Jewish Health Care Center where she had resided after having a major stroke in September 2000 that left her partially paralyzed.

Angela Donati was born in St. Louis, MO, the only daughter of an Italian immigrant, Leo S. Donati, and his wife Rose (née Gualdoni). Her father, though he had not finished grade school, instilled in her early a belief in the importance of education and was determined that she should have the same opportunities as her two brothers. The lesson was well learned, as she earned her B.A., summa cum laude, from Webster College in Missouri, her M.A. from St. Louis University and, when she was 44 years old, her Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

She began her teaching career in 1951 at Nerinx Hall High School in Missouri and ended it in 1995, when she retired from Assumption College, where she had been a professor of English, Writing, and

Women's Studies. Many of her students developed lifelong friendships with her and others sought her out years later to thank her, including a group from Nerinx Hall who contacted her recently when celebrating their 50th reunion.

Dr. Dorenkamp's degrees and teaching were only a small part of her achievements. She was a Radcliffe Institute Fellow from 1968-1974 and served on a number of academic committees and boards throughout her career. From 1977-1981, she was vice-president and president of the Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy and, from 1984-1991, she served as an officer, including president, of the College English Association. She was a frequent presenter of papers at academic conferences and also co-edited a Women's Studies text, *Images of Women in American Popular Culture*.

Dr. Dorenkamp was also an activist and prominent member of the Worcester community throughout her life. She moved to Worcester in the early 60's with her then husband, John H. Dorenkamp. With a group of like-minded Catholic friends and colleagues, they fought for civil and women's rights, and advocated for the poor and for peace, and became friends with Abbie Hoffman and his mother, Florence. As the mother of a special needs son, Dr. Dorenkamp was also a strong and personal advocate for him. She served as vice-president of Prospect House, on several committees for the Worcester Public Schools, and on both the City Manager's Advisory Committee on the Status of Women and the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. She also served on the founding steering committee of the Worcester Women's History Project. In 1984 she was named a Worcester Woman of Achievement and in 1995 she was a recipient of both an Honorary Degree from Assumption and of the Katharine F. Erskine award from the YWCA.

After her retirement, Dr. Dorenkamp remained engaged in academic life. She was one of the main organizers of an academic conference devoted to Elizabeth Bishop, and she co-edited a book from that conference, "In Worcester, Massachusetts": *Essays on Elizabeth Bishop From the 1997 Elizabeth Bishop Conference at WPI*. She was also instrumental in securing the headstone for Bishop's previously unmarked grave in Hope Cemetery.

A stroke in 2000 left Dr. Dorenkamp without the ability to walk and speak but, to the astonishment of everyone, she maintained her good spirits throughout her remaining years and continued to find much joy in life, remaining engaged in the lives of her family and friends and passionately concerned with the news and events of the city, nation, and global community. At the Jewish Healthcare Center she was surrounded by an extraordinarily loving and attentive staff, many of whom became her friends. Visits from her children, and from her grandchildren, thrilled her.

For all of her academic and community achievements, Dr. Dorenkamp was most proud of her children and the large, loving group of close friends she made throughout her life. She leaves her four children, Erica A. Dorenkamp and her partner Gretchen Neeley and their children, Harriet and Maud of Watertown, John H. Dorenkamp of Worcester, Thomas M. Dorenkamp and his partner Kathleen Haggarty of Worcester, and Monica Dorenkamp of New York. She also leaves her dear friends, including Annette Rafferty, Lucy Candib, Ginny Ryan, Margarita Reyes, Jeanne Rosenblatt, Barbara Kohin, Edna Sexton and too many more to name. She was predeceased by her two loving brothers, Leo S. and Robert M. Donati of St. Louis.

A Memorial Mass for Dr. Dorenkamp will be held on Saturday, May 18th at 11:00 AM at The Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Assumption College, 500 Salisbury St., Worcester. Arrangements are in the care of CALLAHAN & FAY BROTHERS FUNERAL HOME, 61 Myrtle St.

Donations may be sent to Abby's House, 52 High Street, Worcester, MA 01609, or to the Dr. Angela G. Dorenkamp Scholarship Fund, Assumption College, 500 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609.

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