

ELISABETH AMERY

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Elisabeth Amery was born September 8, 1889 in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin and died July 21, 1976 in Baltimore at the age of 86 years and 10½ months. She was the daughter of Charles Amery and the former Lillian Kersch of Hudson. Her father was of English descent and her mother French. When Elisabeth was five years of age, her mother died and she went to live with her Aunt Jane Amery Hansen. Her brother, William K. Amery, was sent to his grandmother, Mrs. William Amery. The town of Amery, Wisconsin was named for her grandfather, William Amery, who was a Polk County Treasurer. He came to this country from England and was one of the few educated men in the county, having been an Essex scholar. Elisabeth remembered her grandfather entered this country through New Orleans. When he arrived in New Orleans, a smallpox epidemic was raging and he was told to get on a river boat and go as far north as possible. The farthestmost point on the river boat system was St. Croix Falls.

Elisabeth attended the Osceola High School and then Carleton College. After Carleton, she attended Simmons College and the University of Wisconsin, and was graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1913. She left the University of Wisconsin for Lead, South Dakota, where she remained for four years, teaching Home Economics. She then went to the University of Washington in Seattle where she was a professor in the Home Economics Department. After four years, she returned to the University of Wisconsin and worked in the Department of Agriculture. She established the homemakers of Wisconsin and helped develop the first 4 H Clubs in the state. After Wisconsin, she went to Columbia University, where she received her Master's degree. She was then hired to be the supervisor of home economics teachers in the state of Delaware, and remained in this position for four years before coming to Maryland and a similar position with the Maryland Department of Public Education. Elisabeth was the supervisor of home economics teachers in Maryland for 27 years, until her retirement in 1954.

Her years in retirement were busy until two years ago, when she developed a cancer of the colon. She did well following a surgical operation until this winter, when recurrences of the cancer caused her to be eventually admitted to a nursing home in Baltimore, where she died on July 21.

*Read at the Memorial Service for Miss Amery,  
and written by  
Read by Dr. John Simerstad. July 31, 1976*

She is survived by her cousins:

The children of Phil Amery, formerly of St. Croix Falls:

Frances Amery Larson - Hales Corner, Wisconsin

W. James Amery - Minneapolis

George R. Amery - Niagara Falls

and a child of Eva Amery:

Evalyn Amery Colvin McLean of Oak Harbor, Washington.

NOW MORE PERSONAL REMINISCING.....

It is a privilege to bring to you some of my thoughts about Elisabeth Amery. I first met Elisabeth (ELISABETH), or E. A. as her friend, Paul Kaylor, called her, in September, 1950. At that time I was an entering freshman at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Irene Cooper and my mother had told me to call Elisabeth after I got to Baltimore. This I did, and I was invited to her home at 18 West Hamilton Street. I remember walking down Hamilton Street and finding this charming old Baltimore town house which was built by a sea Captain about 1812. We spent that September evening together, and this was a beginning of a friendship that lasted almost 26 years. That evening we had a nice visit, since we had many things in common. We both were from Osceola and were graduates of the Osceola High School. She enjoyed telling her friends this. Also, we both attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. She left Carleton after two years and later attended Simmons College and the University of Wisconsin. I did graduate from Carleton, and sometimes I would tell her friends that she could not get through this school, but I did. We had many other things in common, but two things in particular. We both had a love for traditional furnishings. My mother was my first instructor in the furniture, glass, etc. that went with the traditional, and Elisabeth gave me an advanced course. Also, we were both interested in good food, but from a little different point of view. She loved to prepare good food, and I, as a hungry medical student, loved to eat it. Among the things she introduced me to was a chocolate peppermint cake which is still my favorite, and has become a favorite for my wife and children, too. She particularly loved eating in a restaurant in Baltimore called Marconi's. Two weeks ago when we visited her, she was tired and told us to go off and spend the rest of the day

in downtown Baltimore seeing the tall ships. I told her I was going to take Doris to Marconi's for dinner, and with her usual mannerism, she clapped her hands and said "good, good."

Someone has said you can tell all about a person if you can just see the books in his or her library. When we were in Baltimore recently, we stayed in her apartment, and during the time we were there, I once again had the opportunity to peruse the books on her book shelves. These books were about a number of subjects, but they fit into four main categories: cooking, history and historical furnishings, travel, and religion.

As many of you know, cooking and food was one of her loves. She was a home economist by profession, and cook books were one of the tools of her trade. She enjoyed all kinds of cook books and after she retired was an editor of a cook book sponsored by a retired teachers organization.

I have already mentioned her great love for traditional furnishings. In her library were many books on porcelains, celadon, Chinese art and antiques. She was particularly fond of classic early American Glass and furniture. I have been with her on many occasions when we visited the restored homes in the Baltimore area. She loved Annapolis and the historic homes there. In February, 1975, she went with Doris and me once again to Annapolis where we visited one of these restored homes and gardens. I have traveled with her to visit the Winterthor Museum in Wilmington, and also, she and I made one trip to Charlottesville, Virginia. After her retirement, she was active in a group of citizens who sought to preserve and protect the Mount Vernon Place area of Baltimore.

The third general category of books in her library was travel. Elisabeth particularly liked England, and was a true Anglophile. Some of her vacations were spent in Bermuda, where she also enjoyed the English style of living.

The fourth category of books was religion. She had a life-long interest in religion, and was a very active member of the Unitarian Church in Baltimore, yet her religion was not one of isolated denominationalism. During lent, she attended church services at one of the other churches in the Mount Vernon Place area. In looking at the things on her book shelves, I found a series of articles on religion which had been clipped from old Life Magazines.

It has long been my belief that to live successfully, one must have some knowledge of religion. Religion is important to our lives, since it is the only discipline that can take us away from our great preoccupations with ourselves. Toynbee has said "all the great historic philosophies and religions have been concerned, first and foremost, with the overcoming of egocentricity. All religions teach that egocentricity can only be conquered by love." Men and women will be happy only if they learn to live outside themselves and learn to live with kindness and love for others. Elisabeth Amery was able to live outside herself. She was not insecure and did not need to have her own ego constantly boosted. Her religion gave this to her. For about a month prior to her death, Elisabeth was at the Keswick Home in Baltimore. On the sign outside the home, it says Keswick is a home for the incurables of Baltimore. It is not a dreary place--but there are a few retarded adults in the home. When we were there, I thought it was so typical of Elisabeth--she greeted some of these retarded persons with friendliness and cheerfulness, even though her body and strength were being sapped by a metastatic cancer. She was always able to live outside herself and did so with enthusiasm, kindness, love and a great amount of class.