

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Braman Grasso 09/28/08 Posted: Friday, October 3, 2008 9:04 am

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt Braman Grasso, 79, known to friends and family as "Ellie", died Sunday, Sept. 28, 2008, at her home in Niantic after a three-year battle with cancer. Ellie was born on Feb. 19, 1929, in New York City. She was the daughter of Chester Alwyn Braman Jr. and Anna Hall Braman, a cousin of Eleanor Roosevelt. She spent her childhood in Chatham and Long Island, N.Y. with her siblings. Ellie graduated from Miss Porter's School in Farmington in 1947, then attended Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. In 1952 she married Thomas A. McGraw, MD and they lived in New York City. After Dr. McGraw's death in 1966, she moved to Essex. In 1973, she was married to Graham H. R. Jenkins. After his death, she was married to Dr. Thomas A. Grasso, the widower of Connecticut Governor, Ella T. Grasso. Together, they resided in Old Lyme.

During her time in Essex, Ellie owned and ran the Clipper Ship Bookshop for many years. She was also the founding secretary of the Connecticut River Museum. Ellie's lifelong passion was music and she was a devoted member of the St. Ann's Episcopal Church Choir in Old Lyme, a founding member of Con Brio choral ensemble, and an active member of both the Hartford Chorale and the New York Oratorio Society. Ellie was a world traveler, who traversed the globe both independently and with her various choral groups. She was an avid gardener who was also fond of animals and outdoor activities, especially sailing, skiing and hiking.

Ellie is survived by her children, Thomas A. McGraw Jr. of Windsor, Vt., Paul B. McGraw of Rockville Center, N.Y. and Susan M. Stark of Longmont, Colo.; her step children, Timothy R. Jenkins and his sister, Christine, Susane O. Grasso, James A. Grasso; her step sisters, Mary Otis Fillman of Cambridge, Mass., Gladys S. Thacher of San Francisco, Calif.; and a half brother, Lawrence J. Braman also of Cambridge; four grandchildren; a step grandson and several nieces and nephews.

She is predeceased by her siblings.

A service in celebration of Ellie's life will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008, at St. Ann's Episcopal Church, Shore Rd., Old Lyme, followed by a reception in the church's Griswold Room.

All donations in her memory should be made to the Hartford Chorale, the New York Oratorio Society; or to Mystic Seaport

SAINT ANN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established 1884

Peter T. Vanderveen, M.Div., Rector

*A Service of
Thanksgiving & Celebration
for the life of*

Eleanor B. Grasso

19 February 1929 - 28 September 2008

11 October 2008
11:00 a.m.

82 Shore Road, Old Lyme, Connecticut 06371
Phone (860) 434-1621 • Fax (860) 434-2368
www.saintannsoldlyme.org

The Burial of the Dead, Rite II

Prelude

THE WORD OF GOD

Opening Hymn: 362 - Holy, Holy, Holy

Nicaea

Opening Sentences

p. 491

Collect

p. 493

A Reading from the Book of Isaiah

read by Davis McGraw

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Psalm 46

led by Emma Stark

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow,
and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

A Reading from Second Book of Paul to the Corinthians *read by Molly McGraw*

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling--if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord--for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

**The Lord is my shepherd;
 I shall not want.
 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
 he leadeth me beside the still waters.
 He restoreth my soul;
 he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I will fear no evil;
 for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
 thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
 and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.**

Sequence Hymn: 594 - God of Grace

Cwm Rhondda

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to

John.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me"

Celebrant: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, Lord Christ.

Homily

The Rev. Peter T. Vanderveen

The Apostles' Creed (*read in unison*)

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
 He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
 and born of the Virgin Mary.
 He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 was crucified, died, and was buried.
 He descended to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again.
 He ascended into heaven,
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
 I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,
 the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
 the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The Prayers

p. 496

For our sister Ellie, let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ who said, "I am Resurrection and I am Life."

Lord, you consoled Martha and Mary in their distress; draw near to us who mourn for Ellie, and dry the tears of those who weep.

Hear us, Lord.

You wept at the grave of Lazarus, your friend; comfort us in our sorrow.

Hear us, Lord.

You raised the dead to life; give to our sister eternal life.

Hear us, Lord.

You promised paradise to the thief who repented; bring our sister to the joys of heaven.

Hear us, Lord.

Our sister was washed in Baptism and anointed with the Holy Spirit; give her fellowship with all your saints.

Hear us, Lord.

She was nourished with your Body and Blood; grant her a place at the table in your heavenly kingdom.

Hear us, Lord.

Comfort us in our sorrows at the death of our sister; let our faith be our consolation, and eternal life our hope.

Father of all, we pray to you for Anne, and for all those whom we love but see no longer. Grant to them eternal rest. Let light perpetual shine upon them. May her soul and the souls of all the departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

The Exchange of Peace

Offertory Anthem

Ave Verum

Mozart

*Members of the congregation are invited to join in the singing of this anthem.
The choir will sing the first line "Ave verum corpus natum"
and members of the congregation may join the choir
with the words "ex Maria virgine."*

Offertory Hymn: 420 - When in our Music

Engelberg

THE HOLY COMMUNION

The Great Thanksgiving, Eucharistic Prayer B

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Sanctus S130

Schubert

The Lord's Prayer

The Communion of the People

If you believe that Christ is present in this sacrament, you are invited to partake in this feast.

Communion Anthem

Amazing Grace

New Britain

Postcommunion Prayer

p. 498

Almighty God, we thank you that in your great love you have fed us with the spiritual food and drink of the Body and Blood of your Son Jesus Christ, and have given us a foretaste of your heavenly banquet. Grant that this Sacrament may be to us a comfort in affliction, and a pledge of our inheritance in that kingdom where there is no death, neither sorrow nor crying, but the fullness of joy with all your saints; through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

COMMENDATION

Hymn: 694 - God be in my head

Lyttlington

Celebrant: Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints,

**People: where sorrow and pain are no more,
neither sighing, but life everlasting.**

Celebrant: You only art immortal, the creator and maker of mankind;
and we are mortal, formed of the earth, and unto earth shall
we return. For so did you ordain when you created me,
saying, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." All
of us go down to the dust; yet even at the grave we make our
song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

**People: Give rest, O Christ, to your servant with your saints,
where sorrow and pain are no more,
neither sighing, but life everlasting.**

Celebrant: Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant
Ellie. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your
own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own
redeeming. Receive her into the arms of your mercy, into the
blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious
company of the saints in light. **Amen.**

Closing Hymn: 688 - A Mighty Fortress

Ein feste Burg

(during the 4th verse short organ interludes will be played after each line)

Postlude

*The congregation is invited to join the family at a
reception in the Griswold Room following the service.*

Memorial Donations made be made in Ellie's name to:

*Oratorio Society of New York
1440 Broadway, 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10018*

*Mystic Seaport
75 Greenmanville Avenue
PO Box 6000
Mystic, CT 06355-0990*

*Hartford Chorale
233 Pearl Street, #17
Hartford, CT 06103*

Homily on the Occasion of the
Service of Thanksgiving and Celebration for the Life of
Eleanor B. Grasso
Saint Ann's Episcopal Church, Old Lyme, CT
October 11, 2008

On the Sunday morning when Ellie died, the music of Bach was playing in her room, and she was dressed in her choir robe. How fitting – not only with regard to Ellie's own passions and her long involvement in the world of music, but also with regard to our best access to that which abides, that which, at the very last and smallest point of our being, God opens. In the midst of the transience of life, such music can provide intimations of the eternal and evocations of the promise of faith, the substance of hope, and the constancy and goodness of God.

Karl Barth, arguably the finest theologian of our modern age, was famous, too, for his love of music, especially Mozart. Late in his life, he published an open letter of thanks to Mozart, addressing him as "My dear Maestro and Court composer." The letter concluded with this wonderful statement. He wrote: "What the state of music is where you are now, I can only faintly surmise. Once upon a time I formulated my notion in this way: it may be that when the angels go about their task of praising God, they play only Bach. I am sure, however, that when they are together *en famille*, they play Mozart and that, then too, our Lord listens with special pleasure.

Today, in a manner of speaking, we are *en famille*, as well, gathered here to honor Ellie – not only for her own merits, but, all the more profoundly, to try to glimpse her life from God's perspective – which is not limited, as our perspective is, to relatively flat-footed remembrances, the partial and select memories of our own experiences. The marvelous audacity of faith is that it affords us the possibility of reframing her life, now unbound from time, by the infinite largesse of God's boundless love – which allows us to rejoice in the fullness of life – even in the face of death.

This enormous freedom, the expression of such divine generosity, is what Barth heard and so appreciated in Mozart's music. And Ellie may well have sensed something of the same. As I thought of her last night, these additional words came to mind, from Barth, about Mozart. He noted that "what [Mozart] translated into music was real life... in all its discord... But in defiance of that, and on the sure foundation of God's good creation... Mozart," Barth said, "is universal. One marvels again and again how everything comes to expression in him: heaven and earth, nature and man, comedy and tragedy, passion in all its forms and the most profound inner peace, the Virgin Mary and the demons, the church mass, the curious solemnity of the Freemasons and the dance hall, ignorant and sophisticated people, cowards and heroes (genuine or bogus), the faithful and the faithless, aristocrats and peasants, Papageno and Sarastro. [Mozart]," he wrote, "seemed to concern himself with each of these in turn not only partially but fully; rain and sunshine fell on all."

Last night I read this paragraph several times, and with each repetition it's full extension seemed all the more appropriate and true for Ellie and for the privilege of this time, remembering her – all the variation, all the complexity, this great wash of possibility and desire, of losses and gains, of differences and tensions held together. Her life was not simple or monochromatic. Few lives

are. But her charm often more than matched the things that challenged her – a charm that could be frivolous and fun, masterful and impressive, and, sometimes, with remarkable integrity, heartfelt and reverent. Ellie could be ardent in her desire to get to New York to see and hear, and to support, the best of the best in the arts. And with the same ease she happily put in hours of volunteer time, working down the street at the Nearly New Shop or, in the adjoining room here, knitting shawls for people she did not necessarily know, people who were in need of comfort, of a sign of companionship or a reminder of encouragement. I don't think that Ellie had any illusions about what life inevitably brings, that it can be fractious and tumultuous, immersing us in problems that linger, that seem stubbornly irresolvable, that make us feel all too human. And yet, at the same time, she exuded an open and unguarded hospitality, complemented by both kindness and graciousness, warmth and humor. A laugh, a chuckle, a smile of delight was never hard to get from her. She could be highly empathetic, devoted, compassionate, indiscriminate, welcoming, and benevolent – marvelously human. She embodied real life... in all its discord and on the sure foundation of God's good creation – with her family, to her friends, and for many who simply crossed her path.

Karl Barth was a Swiss Protestant. His neighbor and colleague in Basle, Hans Von Balthasar, was a Roman Catholic of equal standing who wrote a small treatise with the title Truth is Symphonic. I thought of this, too, in thinking of Ellie. Truth is not merely individual. What is real is, rather, the integration of many parts, many sounds, many voices, of varying rhythms and shifting tonalities, that combine, hopefully, at length, to express beauty, in depth and in enduring effect. Ellie loved singing. She loved song, that unique capacity of human beings to lend their voice and mind and soul toward the expression of intimate grandeur, whether in a village church or a city's oratorio choir. We, alone in all creation, share the possibility of experiencing transcendence by being so deeply rooted in the fullness of our humanity – which is symphonic. And we are here today as witnesses to how Ellie made music not only within her life but of it.

In return, and in honor of her, today we are singing – hymns of praise and hope and triumph. Ellie made the request that Mozart be sung for this service, specifically his setting of Ave Verum Corpus. We have made available copies of this music, with the hope that those of you who know it will join in the singing, wherever you are seated, from wherever you have come. To sing would be appropriate in remembrance of her. The song is appropriate to the promise of God, of love made real in Jesus' incarnation, of love made clear in his passion shown, of love defiant, against all discord, even denial and betrayal, of love made victorious in resurrection after death, of love given us in sacrament, where God's eternity meets our own fragility, where in this moment – all too human – we are given a foretaste of God's heaven, not in abstraction, but in the specific beauty of our lives, of Ellie's and ours with hers.

In John's Gospel, read this morning, Jesus disclosed to his disciples the fundamental truth of God in one, crystalline statement. He told them that they could trust this: that where he was, there they would be also. God came to us, embodied, so that we, in time and in eternity, could see that we are with God – in life and after death. Today, let us honor this profoundly, remembering Ellie, with the dazzling playfulness of Mozart, with the unshakable confidence of Bach. She, I think, would be most pleased with both.

The Rev. Peter Vanderveen