

QUARM



JOAN HELENA QUARM The final curtain has fallen, the lights have faded, the house is now dark: Professor Joan Helena Quarm died peacefully in El Paso on December 28, 2010. Born in Bristol, England in 1920 to Mary and Samuel George Phelan, she spent her childhood in Gloucester, and graduated from Redding College and Cambridge University. She studied in London during the WWII Blitz and began teaching at the renowned Summerhill School under A.S. Neil. She then moved to Portugal to teach for the British Council at St. Julian's School near Lisbon, and Portugal always remained one of her favorite places. After her marriage to G. Harvey Summ, she became an American citizen and briefly lived in Washington, D.C. before moving to Peru where she taught for the American Council. There she met her second husband, Thomas A.A. Quarm, and they moved to Kitwe, Northern Rhodesia in the early 1950's followed by a move to El Paso. She retired after 30 years in the English Department at UTEP, returning to her beloved Portugal for seven years before coming back to El Paso. Almost everywhere she went--Peru, Africa, Texas--Joan founded a theater. In El Paso, there were three: The Theater, Festival, and Teatro Los Pobres-- as well as The Gilbert and Sullivan Company of El Paso, which is still ongoing after forty-five years. In the late sixties, she was awarded a federal grant to begin the first bilingual theatre group which ultimately led to the outdoor historical drama, "Viva El Paso". Her work included directing three operas for the El Paso Civic Opera Company and three operettas for the Beaumont Civic Opera. For several decades, she was the entertainment and art critic for the El Paso Herald Post and produced weekly programs on the arts for UTEP's public radio station KTEP for 10 years. Professor Quarm received numerous awards for her vast community and educational service, and was especially proud of being recognized as a Brontë authority, receiving the Minnie Piper Award for teaching excellence, and for being one of the few women to receive El Paso's highest recognition--the Conquistador Award. She is preceded in death by two sons, Robin Anthony Quarm and Christopher Noel Quarm, her beloved sister Cecilia Mary Phelan, and both of her husbands. She is survived by her daughter Susanna Summ McMahan and her sons Thomas Michael Quarm and Nicholas Jonathon Quarm. She leaves a legacy of eight grandchildren: Jennifer Boone, Catherine Watson, Sarah Barker, Christian Quarm, Anthony Quarm, Michael Quarm, Nicholas Michael Quarm, and Alexandra Welch-Quarm, and nine great-grandchildren. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the El Paso Hospice or to the Gilbert & Sullivan Scholarship Fund in her name. A memorial celebration of her life will be held at the Scottish Rite Theatre on January 15th, 2011 at 2:00pm. All whose lives she touched are invited to attend.