



Elsie Nicol

March 22, 2006

Elsie Nicol, 85, died peacefully in her sleep on Wednesday, March 22, 2006, at Columbine West's Hospice Unit from congestive heart failure. Mrs. Nicol, as she was known to her many Fort Collins and Poudre High School students, was born May 26, 1920, on a ranch near Roberts, Mont. Elsie Marie Dora Kansala was the daughter of Marie Korpela and Carl Kansala, Finnish immigrants who were ranchers and coal miners. Elsie grew up and was educated in Red Lodge, Mont., spending her summers working the family ranch. Her father, following work in the coal mines, moved the family to Superior, Wyo., in 1936, where Elsie graduated valedictorian of her high school class. Elsie attended the University of Washington, graduating magna cum laude with a degree in chemistry and mathematics in 1942. She was elected to the Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society. After graduation, Elsie went to work as a chemist in the Bremerton, Wash., Navy Yard. During that time, she met and married Lt. John J. Jack Nicol, a coast artillery officer. Jack returned from the Pacific Theater after World War II and they returned to Jack's hometown of Brooklyn, N.Y. Shortly thereafter, Jack and Elsie headed west to California. They stopped overnight in Fort Collins and never left. Elsie was her husband's helpmate in his real estate and commercial property development career. Elsie also had a career of her own in education. She dearly cared for her students and taught chemistry and math at Fort Collins and Poudre High Schools for 12 years. She cared for all her students, but had a special bonding with her students in remedial girls math. In 1964, Elsie earned her

master's degree in mathematics from Colorado State University and was elected to the Phi Kappa Phi Educational Honor Society. She then went on to instruct in the Education Department at CSU for eight years, teaching teachers how to teach. During her 60-plus years in Fort Collins, Elsie was very involved in a multitude of activities in the community covering the gamut from educational, health, political and religious organizations. To list all of Elsie's activities would be far too numerous. However, Elsie was most proud of serving as a trustee of the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado for more than six years. She served on its education committee from the beginning and visited schools and teachers seeking E3 grants. Her proudest "grant" was in selecting the Empty Bowls project at Lopez Elementary School. This "project" has become an annual fundraiser for the Food Bank for Larimer County. She was on the planning committee and a life-long supporter of the Discovery Science Center of Fort Collins. She was the co-founder of the original Citizens Committee for Public Schools and she also served on a committee combining 50 small school districts into three larger ones in Larimer County. Elsie is preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Elmer Kansala; and her husband of 55 years, Jack. Elsie is survived by her two sons and their families, John and Kathy Nicol of Fort Collins and Zach and Amber Nicol of Highlands Ranch, Maija Nicol of San Diego, Bill and Alayne Nicol of Red Lodge, Mont., Bill Nicol of Bozeman, Mont., Chad Nicol of Grand Cayman, Julie Nicol of Boston and Kari Nicol of Billings, Mont. A community service will be at 2 p.m. Tuesday at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 1208 W. Elizabeth St. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Hospice of Larimer County, Project Self-Sufficiency, Crossroads Safe House or Longs Peak Council of the American Boy Scouts in care of Bohlender Funeral Chapel, 121 W. Olive St., Fort Collins, CO 80524.