

Memorial Minutes 1997

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY
MEETING *of* FRIENDS

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Elizabeth H. Boardman

Elizabeth H. Boardman, one of the founders of Acton Friends Meeting, died at Medford Leas, New Jersey on May 24, 1996, soon after her 80th birthday. She was buried near Philadelphia next to her husband, Donnell, in a simple Sufi ceremony. A memorial meeting was held in Acton on June 24, 1996.

During World War II, Elizabeth taught English while Donnell did alternative service as a physician at several internment camps for Japanese-Americans. After settling in Acton, Elizabeth became a peace activist, volunteered at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), exchanged visits with Russian women as a member of the New England Voice of Women, which she co-founded, and ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1962.

Elizabeth served long and faithfully in the New England Regional Office of the AFSC. She was the film librarian for many years, notably during the Vietnam War, when the AFSC Film Library was instrumental in educating people about the war. She also built up its resources on South Africa. During one of the region's many difficult periods, Elizabeth served with distinction as Acting Executive Secretary, bridging the gap between Robert Lyons and Marjorie Swann.

The Clamshell Alliance was founded in the Boardman kitchen in 1974 to protest the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant. Elizabeth gave sustained and intense leadership region-wide to the non-violence training and affinity groups in preparation for the occupations of the Seabrook Nuclear Plant site. She was one of the protesters arrested and detained in a Manchester armory. In the June 1977 *Peacework* she wrote "We started out with a hazy utopian idea and lived it up to a practical reality. We lived out non-violence strategy and found that we were building community — a community of mutual appreciation and understanding with our neighbors (officials, bureaucrats, guards, police) and a community of sharing and support and love among ourselves (Clams). The longer and more firmly we held on to the discipline the more deeply the concept of *Ahimsa* — the power of non-violence to change others — caught hold of us. It worked! The surge of energy and light that built up and burned through those crazy armories was palpable and visible! We came to New Hampshire to protest and civilly to disobey to make our protest audible. We remained to reach out to others and to teach and attract — and to enlist new Clams. We came for four days and signed on for

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a decade. We are on the way!"

Acton Meeting started in the early 1950s as a Sunday evening worship group in the Boardman home. Elizabeth served on Acton Meeting's Ministry and Counsel and was clerk for two years. In New England Yearly Meeting, she was on Permanent Board and the Correspondence Committee, and for a time, volunteered at the Worcester office. She was on the board of The Meeting School, which she supported and promoted with concern and enthusiasm.

Elizabeth Boardman set unwaveringly high standards for herself, and encouraged others to act on the same level. She will be missed for her brilliant mind, her concern for humanity, her creativity, and persistence as a peace activist, and her devotion to Quaker principles.

—ACTON FRIENDS MEETING, SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING

Mary H. Damerel

Mary Damerel, a birthright Friend, lived nearly all of her long life on Elm Street within a few yards of the meetinghouse of the Westerly Monthly Meeting. How fortunate the Meeting has been to have her nearby! She kept a key to the meetinghouse in her garage and attended meeting with great regularity. She served as Clerk of Westerly Meeting from 1945 to 1958.

She remembered when many wore plain clothes and when her mother worried about changing to a trimmed hat. She saw attendance dwindle to a handful, then burgeon to respectable numbers. She represented New England Yearly Meeting of Friends at the 1937 Friends World Conference held at Swarthmore College and was active in hosting Friends attending the Yearly Meeting Sessions in Westerly until it was discontinued in 1945. She vividly recalled the final solemn session as members looked forward to a new union of all Friends in New England. Some of these matters are in a short history Madie wrote for our records.

She was graduated from Connecticut College in 1922 and acquired an MA in 1935. As a teacher of English language in Westerly for 33 years, she not only emphasized grammatically correct writing, but was also an example to the young of a real lady — tall and imposing, yet gracious and generous with her time and her resources. She took devoted care of her mother and was always concerned for her neighbors and the people in the Meeting.

Her kind, gentle love was balanced with refreshing spunk and humor. Talking with Madie was always a joy. Her respect for other

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human beings helped each one with whom she conversed. We are grateful for her spiritual strength and for her exemplary life.

—WESTERLY MONTHLY MEETING, RHODE ISLAND-SMITHFIELD QUARTER

Bessie F. (Isenor) Ewen

Bessie F. (Isenor) Ewen was born in North Smithfield, Rhode Island on November 13, 1904. She was the daughter of Esther (Aldrich) Isenor and Henry Isenor. She attended the public schools in North Smithfield and graduated from the Woonsocket Commercial School. She worked in several offices before her marriage to Battye Ewen. They had four children, first Robert and Jean and ten years later Neil and Susan.

Bessie became a member of Smithfield Monthly Meeting of Friends after her marriage to Battye. She served as clerk of the meeting for several years. In addition, she was president of the Ladies Aid Society, a member of the Missionary Committee and active on other committees. Bessie was always ready to help when needed. But with her busy life, it was her cheerful personality that stood out. She was very industrious. She became an excellent seamstress, cook, and homemaker. Bessie liked people and had a good sense of humor; she enjoyed her children and grandchildren and spent time with them.

After selling the farm where she had lived, she hired an apartment and learned to drive when in her seventies. Later she went to live with her son Robert and daughter-in-law Patti in Connecticut and spent winters with her daughter Susan and son-in-law Leslie in the Carolinas where she died March 17, 1997 at the age of 92.

Bessie Ewen was a faithful attender at Sunday Morning worship, Quarterly Meeting and New England Yearly Meeting. New attenders were greeted warmly by Bessie and made to feel welcome. Older Friends confided in her. She understood Quaker ways and lived by them.

This gracious lady will be remembered and missed by all who knew her.

—SMITHFIELD MONTHLY MEETING, RHODE ISLAND-SMITHFIELD QUARTER