

**Words spoken by Jack at the Memorial Service for Mary, held at the Mt Eden Meeting House of the Society of Friends, on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2014**

Mary, my partner of 64 years and devoted mother of our 5 children, 14 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild, was born 90 years ago in Kaitaia, where she spent the first 13 years of her life. Her experiences there, through the Depression, launched her on a life-long commitment to Socialism.

A sensitive and nervy child, she developed a love of history, philosophy and poetry as she progressed through High School in Invercargill and Napier. An expanding collection of slim volumes from the Thinkers Library, 1/6 per copy, became a treasured possession. She and High School beau Brian in Napier would sit up late analysing the latest acquisition. The inscription on the flyleaf of Benn's "History of Ancient Philosophy" reads: "*Mary from Brian (your choice), Xmas 1941*". This passion for knowledge and understanding was inherent in her.

Elsie Locke in her book "Peace People" later wrote of Mary in her work as National Secretary of the NZ Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: "*The work of CND has had its value rest on constant attention to accuracy and moderation*". Over many years Mary kept daily scrapbooks of newspaper cuttings that were a basic resource for her work in peace organisations and public affairs.

Mary completed a BA in Auckland in 1944 and an MA in History at Canterbury in 1946. This was when she discovered debating and her love of tramping, which persisted over the next 4 decades of her life. Her final exploit was a circuit of the Greenstone and Routeburn Tracks at the age of 80. In between she had explored in Canada, US, Australia, Nepal and PNG. Her feeling for remote places was driven by a spiritual and romantic need, evident also in her love of poetry.

It was with Quakers that Mary found a religious base for her life. As a child and teen-ager she was a devout Anglican – but in the run-up to confirmation at the age of 15 serious doubts emerged. To please her mother she was confirmed, then took to her bed with a severe migraine and thereafter turned her back on formal religion. She found her way to the Society of Friends after time in a Quaker-led Work Camp in Italy in 1952. Freedom from dogma, a belief in "*that of god in everyone*", and the *Quaker Testaments to Peace, Simplicity and Integrity* were a sufficient basis for her faith.

In keeping with her mantra "*If you want Peace, work for Justice*", Mary was a strongly political animal. Back in NZ from Canada in the 1950's, as Secretary to the Fendalton Branch of the Labour Party (a seeming oxymoron) she transformed the Branch into a veritable policy think tank. She escorted Bill Rowling (later PM) to street corner election meetings on the back of the local milkman's truck.

Again in Australia her energy went into the Labour Party. But back in NZ from PNG in the 80's and 90's the treachery of the Roger Douglas years drove her to work for the Alliance Party which had reformed on the left.

As her family was growing up in Christchurch and Adelaide she made lasting friendships with many international students. Within a few hours of her death Junid Abu Saham emailed me from Malaysia: "*I could recall very clearly one Xmas lunch we had with the whole of the Woodward family, almost 54 years ago ....*". And Norman Foo from Sydney: "*Moral mentor they were – and are. Whenever I have to resolve quandaries, I ask "How would Mary and Jack decide?"*"

Her 7 years in PNG through Independence and beyond were heaven to Mary. Teaching first-year students at the University of Technology, developing her ideas on Third World development in partnership with like minds, researching local history, and exploring a wild, exotic environment brought so many things together for her.

There was satisfaction as well as disappointment in her last decades in NZ. She herself made little of the award of a NZ 1990 Commemoration Medal for her services to peace and disarmament, though it was important to her family.

She worked hard for her Friends Meeting and for her local community as Secretary of the Grafton Residents Association.

She made the most of her Govt. appointment to PACDAC (Public Advisory Committee for Disarmament and Arms Control), which was financed by French reparations for the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior. Her activist abilities were frequently called upon, for Greenpeace, Amnesty and notably in 1981 protests against the Springbok Tour.

She was best known to many people for her regular Letters to the Editor, incisive, clear, uncompromising, and fully-researched. One letter, dated July 1999, concluded: "*The real problem is that institutions like health and education which should be dedicated to public service are being forced to go into business to make enough money to function. A healthy well-educated community benefits everyone, so we should all pay for it. Lower taxes are not the greatest good.*"

Her last years were hard, as blindness overtook her and Alzheimers broke that fierce crusading spirit, but we are here today to remember the Mary who worked so hard "to make a difference".

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Mary Woodward (far-right) at a dawn-to-dusk vigil outside Parliament while the nuclear-free Southern Hemisphere petition was debated, 21 August 1963.

(Photo: The Evening Post)