

Elizabeth “Betty” Cole Morris
(17 May 1915 – 9 October 2010)

Our Friend Betty Morris (as she was always known) lived a life of vigorous witness for the cause of peace and social justice. She also is remembered by us for innumerable small acts of kindness given with love and humility. She was a woman of strong beliefs and a willingness to work to see her goals met.

Elizabeth Cole was born into a family of social and political activists in Elma, Washington in 1915. She was a convinced pacifist by the time she attended college, when she joined the activities of Friends House in Seattle and when she married Robert Stevens, also a peace activist. During her years as a wife and mother – often moving to accommodate her husband's career – she taught drama in public schools and colleges and served as a speech therapist. In 1966 she married John Morris, her second husband, who died after ten happy years together. She had two children and several grandchildren.

Friend Betty's social views initially led her into the Unitarian-Universalist church, but regular attendance at Friends' worship in William Penn House (near her Capitol Hill home) and at Friends Meeting of Washington led her to a different spiritual path. As she wrote in her 1985 letter of application for membership: “The journey ahead through . . . silent communion . . . is one I shall undertake in humility and prayer that I can learn.” She formally joined our meeting in 1988.

During her attendance at our Meeting, Betty was most visible for her commitment to monthly letter-writing on behalf of Amnesty International (she reported 204 letters sent from one session as the record) and for stepping forward to organize pot-luck lunches when that fellowship has nearly died out. (She called this “fellowship-via-the-culinary-arts”.) She maintained her enthusiasm for the work of William Penn House, frequently hosting visitors when the house was full. Letters in her Personal File testify to her deep concern for the private concerns of Friends. (“Your mother's needs have been on my mind since we talked on Sunday” is typical.)

In her retirement she picked up her early love of writing, publishing a volume of poetry (*Waiting for Climbers*) and a novel (*Falling, I Find Wings*). During her last, housebound years she continued to display her gentle, warm concern for Friends and their world, not complaining of her gradual loss of mobility but rather sending the Meeting regular notes of thanks for small kindnesses and of encouragement of our activities, often with useful insights. “I'd like to be remembered some day at my memorial service,” she wrote with some papers she had sent for inclusion in her file, and Friends of this Meeting continue to remember her fondly.