

**OPAL GOODEN**  
**October 13, 1911 - January 1, 1982**

Diogenes was said to have gone around ancient Greece with a lantern, looking for an honest and good man. Had Diogenes been alive in this country, he could have ended his search by finding an honest and good woman. Opal Gooden would have fulfilled all of his requirements and indeed would have surpassed them in categories Diogenes never dreamed of -- for example, in her laid-back gutsy humor, in her open- hearted welcoming of the experiences which life brought her, and in her enormous capacity to enrich the lives of those around her.

Perhaps it might be better said that Opal was in her own way a Diogenes herself, for she was one who always looked for the best in those whose great benefit it was to know her. And best of all, Opal often found what she was seeking - even if she had to create in the person she found those qualities she felt to be there. Some people may be said to rise to meet the challenge of an occasion or event; she would inspire to take on the challenge she had raised. With her help, they would then succeed. One might call Opal a kind of wonderful leaven, for she brought out qualities in people that were not evident previously -- even to them!

Opal's life was interwoven with that of the Meeting, to our immeasurable benefit. For example, she had the vision to see the need for expanding the Meeting beyond the limitations imposed by the Meeting House's physical plant. And so she conceived the idea of buying what eventually became Quaker House. Once having conceived the idea, she had to sell it, and sell it she did! Opal outmarshalled, out flanked, outworked and outwitted all opposition to the purchase of Quaker House. With her great good sense, she was able to bring this Meeting together to do precisely what it needed to do. Having won the necessary approval to buy the building, Opal then organized members to adapt it to suit both the short and long-term purposes of the Meeting. She understood better than most what this consisted of. Thanks to her, so much of the Meeting life now takes place at Quaker House that it is probably inconceivable to newer members to imagine how we ever did without it. And therein lies part of the genius of Opal Gooden.

Another aspect of Opal's life which touched the heart of this Meeting was her ability to give precisely that advice to help-seekers which the seeker needed. If anyone had a crisis of conscience, or was puzzled by an ethical dilemma, Opal knew just how to pose the problem so that its moral resolution became clear. Many a troubled heart left Opal with a singing heart, knowing finally what needed to be done. This gift is not given to many, and her skill was treasured by those of us who benefitted so greatly from it.

Finally, Opal was fun! She was the sort of person who laughed at life's absurdities - even in the face of increasing pain - and who encouraged you to laugh along with her. She was a superb story teller. I can see her now - tilting her hat back, drawling, AWell, now...@ in her slow Texas accent, and launching into a United Mineworker story with an infectious laugh. I can't wait to hear how it turns out B thanks to some of Opal's good advice, maybe we all will have the opportunity to do so when we all meet again. Opal was a rare example of the best that the Quaker faith has to offer this world B and the next.

Member Friends Meeting of Washington, 1959 - 1982

Meeting service:

Friends Meeting of Washington Fiftieth Anniversary Committee (1980 Committee)  
1978 - 1980.

Finance and Property Committee, five years; Alternate Clerk one year.

Clerk, Friends Meeting of Washington, one summer.

Quaker House Committee of Management.