

PHYLLIS HISER NELSON
September 22, 1932 --September 8, 1993

Communities and Meetings alike need strong members, imbued with a can-do attitude and the skills to finish difficult tasks that would tire less willing and less able souls. Friends Meeting of Washington and the Dupont Circle community both lost such a Friend with the death of Phyllis Hiser Nelson on September 8, 1993.

Phyllis was an activist; when she saw a job that needed doing, she rolled up her sleeves and started to work. She joined the Meeting in 1966, saying in her letter of application, "When the children were in school all day I checked around to find something I could do that would be of some good to the world outside my own family." To be sure, she appreciated the faith that lies behind the work of Friends, but her faith found its highest expression in the life she led and the work she accomplished.

Her work in the garden and on building maintenance were legendary. A former administrative secretary of the Meeting wrote that Phyllis did all of the renovation of Quaker House, "a run down building next door to the Meetinghouse which was bought in the late Sixties. Alone, or occasionally with the help of her husband, George, she did the rewiring, plumbing, carpentry, sanding, glazing, gutter-repairing, wall-papering, painting, window re-framing and door re-hanging. In doing this renovating, she contributed thousands of hours of hard, physical labor and much of the material, all first class." With her father, she re-landscaped the Meetinghouse grounds, planting hundreds of shrubs, bulbs, and annuals. Once planted, she, George, and her father maintained the garden for many years.

She was a Trustee of the Meeting and clerk of Finance and Property Committee, to name only a few of her committee assignments. She contributed home-baked food to the Senior Center and to the International Student House, was a trustee of the School for Friends, and supported countless good works

She was also a pillar of her community. She was active in the Dupont Circle Citizens Association and a founder of the Dupont Circle Conservancy. She was director of volunteer services at Children's Hospital, a board member of the Green Door (for the mentally handicapped) and of Sandy Spring Friends School.

Phyllis died of AIDS. She continued to work, to volunteer, and to contribute to the many causes she loved until she grew too weak to continue; she knew when it was time to pass duties on to others. She was a brave, as clear-thinking, and as direct at the end of her life as she was in the midst of it.

Phyllis Nelson was, in every respect, a powerful force of Nature, a force for good, a person who made her life stand for something.