

Testimony to the Grace of God in the Life of Mona Callin  
March 22, 1926 – March 7, 2020  
Hamilton Monthly Meeting

Mona Callin was born March 22, 1926, the middle of three children. She spent her early childhood with her parents and sister and brother in Scunthorpe, England, also visiting her maternal grandparents in Grimsby. Mona grew up and into adulthood during the Great Depression and World War II.

Mona's first encounter with Quakers was at age 13, when she was sent to Ackworth School, not far from her home. Mona felt very in tune with Quaker values and practice, and looked back on her five years at Ackworth with great fondness.

After Ackworth, Mona trained as a nurse in Oswestry in Shropshire, and at the Leicester Royal Infirmary. After her general training, Mona went on to train in midwifery, which was the usual path to becoming a nurse. Mona made warm and caring connections with Quaker families in her various locations of training. Later, as a mature student at University (a time she recalls as having mental doors opened), she gained further qualifications and became a professor of nursing for decades, a career which she found stimulating, challenging, and fulfilling.

Mona's brother moved with his family from England to Montréal, and encouraged Mona to come work at the new Montréal General Hospital, which she did. Later both households moved to Ontario, where Mona taught at McMaster University Medical Centre's School of Nursing. Mona stayed close to her brother's family in Ontario, as well as her sister's family in Australia. She travelled extensively around the world, including Canada, Europe, Asia, and the UK, as well as Australia.

Mona cared for family and friends with thoughtfulness and compassion, and was a loving and encouraging mentor to many. She was a wise and cherished Friend, a deeply beloved aunt, a generous and kind person. She took great interest in the babies and young people in Meeting, many of whom considered her one of their special adults, or an extra grandmother. She loved flowers, nature, birds, and being outdoors. She also loved being around people, especially children of all ages, and loved to take friends to lunch or be taken to lunch.

At age 69, when asked, "What message would you like to pass on to the younger ones?" Mona's answer was: "Like and love yourself. Respect others. Believe in yourself and your perceptions. Have courage. Develop your potential, including your spiritual life."

Retirement she saw as the best part of her life. She greatly enjoyed her volunteer work, especially as a docent at the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Mona was a lover of the arts – she thoroughly enjoyed theatre, opera, dance, art galleries, and museums. She felt that retirement was an opportunity for developing and nurturing her spiritual life, and continuing to make her home a welcoming place of beauty, simplicity, and peacefulness.

Mona served The Religious Society of Friends in many ways over the course of her long association with Quakers. In particular, her perspicacity and her knowledge of Quaker process and ways were valued at business meetings at monthly, half-yearly, and yearly meeting levels, and of course she was very valuable on Ministry and Counsel at various levels. She served on CYM

Ecumenical Committee and other Yearly Meeting committees. She became more involved with Quaker service after retirement, and Friends across Canada benefitted from her knowledge, insights, and wisdom. Mona served as Clerk of CFSC for some years, in addition to which she served as the Personnel Clerk for a long time, and was exceptional in that role.

Various Friends remember Mona in these terms:

“She made such a deep impact on everyone she served with at the Service Committee. Deeply compassionate, but also tough when she needed to be. Warm and funny, thoughtful, and that glorious laugh.”

“Mona was always elegant and lady-like, a cheerful, encouraging and reliable presence. But her humour was never far away. Who can forget her at CYM family night, wearing a huge red hat and reciting: 'When I grow old I shall wear purple. With a red hat that doesn't go.' What a gift she was in so many ways!”

“Mona cared for me (likely all of us) with loving watchfulness.”

“The grace of God was much in evidence with her, not only as a Friend but also as a nurse and nursing educator.”

While still able to care for herself, Mona was always elegant in her appearance. Even when physical limitations meant that dressing herself had become more challenging, she altered her wardrobe to continue to contain coordinated outfits in rich beautiful colours.

Her presence in Meeting was grounding for all. Even after dementia had claimed much of her cognition, she remained cheerful, full of love and humour, and gracious in her attitude. As one Friend put it, Mona was “a wonderful thread in our tapestry of Friends.”

Mona received a diagnosis of dementia long before there were any perceptible signs of it from outside, and told only two Friends at the time, taking one or two others into her confidence later, but it was several years before its impact became visible. Even after her faltering cognition began to be noticeable, her deep wisdom could still be tapped, and her loving insightfulness and knowledge were very helpful at a critical time during her service on Ministry and Counsel of Yonge Street Half-Yearly Meeting. As Mona's independence declined, Friends found ways for her to continue to attend Yearly Meeting (for a time), and weekly Meeting for Worship for much longer. And then yet another gift she brought to our Meeting was the presence of one of her nieces often and another one occasionally, as they helped her to attend Meeting. Dementia took its final toll in early March 2020, two weeks short of her 94<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Mona will be deeply missed, but as her failing frail physical self has been abandoned, we feel her many gifts, including wisdom, humour, warmth, intelligence, graciousness, and many others, have been restored to us in our memories of her, and in our own lives as we honour her while we carry on.

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