

Madeline Ziesel - Memorial Minute Newtown Friends Meeting

Madeline Ann Ziesel's parochial education gave her a rich grounding in Christianity. It also undoubtedly contributed to her early awareness and appreciation of the importance of each person's spirituality. Madeline sought a harmonious balance of mind, body and spirit in her life, and as an adult Quaker simplicity offered a path to achieve the life she wanted to live.

She pursued that balance with unerring self discipline, starting each day with yoga and meditation. She ate carefully, chose her reading judiciously, and was mindful of how she spent her time. She sought beauty in her life and took time to travel and visit museums.

With her grandson she traveled near and far, assuring that he would have a broad view of both the United States and the World.

Madeline came to Newtown Meeting from Solebury Meeting, a lifelong seeker earnestly continuing her spiritual journey. She soon joined a Spiritual Formation group in a yearlong commitment to selected reading, periodic meetings, and scheduled retreats, and a continuing commitment to meditation and worship sharing. She also participated in Friendly Eights.

Madeline's messages in Meeting reflected her interest in children and young adults, her love of learning and the depth of her thinking.

Madeline was close to her son Vincent and daughter Joanne Emmons, and she had an extraordinarily close relationship with her grandson Dayton Emmons, who lives in New Jersey. After moving to Newtown, Madeline created a second home in Marblehead, Massachusetts where her son and his wife live. She found peace and solace living close to the ocean, near her son, and she treasured every minute she could be there.

Madeline's dedication to helping children learn continued long after her retirement as a school psychologist. She volunteered in local schools, working with young school children who needed individual attention. She also volunteered at the Newtown Library.

While at Pennswood Village, Madeline was tireless in her insistence on the need for a quiet space to meditate. She met with resistance for a very long time, but she persisted and due to Madeline alone, that space has been created, serving as a concrete memorial to her. It is a wonderful example of her determination in pursuing not only what was important to her but what she felt was the right thing to do.

Madeline faced her final year with courage and dignity. She knew her time was limited when she wrote to her grandson, sharing her wisdom as a special gift to him.

That letter was read at her Memorial Service, reminding us of Madeline's values, and what she felt was important for a good life well lived.

"Habits are very important...Strength comes from doing hard things and learning you can do them. ... It is helpful to be part of a loving community of people trying to live well... "

"The Ten Commandments are basic necessary rules for living. Add the Platonic ideals of Beauty, Truth and Goodness as the simple foundation for a good life well lived. Call on these for guidance so you know you are on the right track.... "

Caroline Wilson