

**Newtown Friends Meeting Memorial Minute for
JoAnn Woodman
1925-2018**

JoAnn Woodman's life was one of self-giving service and devotion to family and friends here and abroad. Having lost both parents in her youth, JoAnn especially cherished her year in a boarding school in England, and went on to graduate from George School and Mt. Holyoke College, where she formed lifelong friendships. Later, while living with the Burton family in Newtown, JoAnn met and married Lew Woodman following his three years of service as a conscientious objector to war. Lew built their own home, and for 68 years until JoAnn's death in December they shared a partnership that was a model for many couples.

JoAnn valued family highly, raising her daughter Susan and son Tom through childhood before beginning a 20-year elementary school teaching career that evolved into a special love for her six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. JoAnn never stopped teaching, though - and at Newtown Friends Meeting she served on more than one occasion as Clerk of Religious Education.

What stands out for many Meeting members is JoAnn's dedicated service on Overseers (now Care and Counsel). She fulfilled a major role in Overseers' consideration of Meeting policy on marriage. After first cautiously recommending support for same-sex *union*, the committee felt ready, months later, to recommend that a request for same-sex *marriage* be welcomed and taken under the Meeting's oversight. This was all very sensibly initiated *before* there was an actual request from a couple!

JoAnn also exemplified faith-in-action in the way she cared for people, making it her mission to ensure that newcomers felt genuinely welcomed to Meeting. "JoAnn is the reason I'm here!" recalled one Friend. "I planned to visit three or four other Meetings, but the minute JoAnn greeted me at the door, I was *in*!" A Friend agreed: "JoAnn would 'look under the awning' for every new soul that walked through the door, but then followed up. When I was making a career change, JoAnn grilled me, in her loving way, and kept in touch thereafter. . . . But if you ask something, be prepared for her honest reaction!"

Out of JoAnn's great passion for social justice she contributed endless volunteer hours to the League of Women Voters, The Peace Center, the U.N. Association, and Aid for Friends. She also taught reading skills through VITA, seeing education as the primary path for moving ahead in the world and wanting all people to have a voice. She held everyone to a high standard, encouraging their self-sufficiency and providing support and encouragement to be their best self.

JoAnn loved to learn new things and visit new places. She volunteered with The Peace Center's fledgling Intern program for a number of years in the 1980s, and in the fall of 1995 JoAnn joined with a large delegation from Philadelphia to participate in the Fourth World Conference on Women in China. As usual, she made the most of the trip, taking every opportunity to become acquainted with Chinese hosts and delegates from around the world, join impromptu sessions, see sights in Beijing and Shanghai, and even bicycle out into the countryside! On her return, JoAnn spoke everywhere and often about what she had learned. It was no doubt one of the high points in her spiritually grounded and vigorously lived life. JoAnn Woodman died peacefully at Pennswood Village on December 3, 2018.

