

Julia Balderston

As a child, Julia Balderston remembered asking grown-ups the meaning of "the World". Then one morning at her father's farm, she woke to a snowy whiteness that extended as far as she could see. She never forgot the vastness of that early vision.

At age 22, Julia left her home near Dolington to spend the next 50 years exploring that world. In California, Mexico, Paris and New York, she absorbed the life around her, studying, hiking, holding a variety of jobs, challenged especially by the world of art and music closed to her as a Quaker youth.

She returned to a small bungalow in Newtown and some years later moved into the Friends Home, where she remained until just prior to her death at the age of 106. Though her spiritual roots were centered from childhood in Makefield Meeting, she became an involved and beloved member of Newtown Meeting.

Julia had a remarkable memory and a great zest for life. Few could remember the names and ages of so many children or what colleges they attended or anecdotes about them and their parents that spanned a full century. She was a supreme judge of character, with a ready wit and a timely sense of history that would, in a few well-chosen words, raise the consciousness of all to the issues of our times.

Julia lived with discipline and decisiveness. "People spend too much time talking about what they eat and not enough time feeding the mind." Her gift was not so much in saying or doing extraordinary things, as in elevating the ordinary to a plane of excellence.

She could be tender, too. Well into her hundreds, and threatened by her own diminished sight and hearing, she would, on occasion, visit friends in nursing homes. Leaning over them, her hand holding theirs, listening to what they had to say, giving them news, recalling to them something that gave them pleasure, and responding with genuine interest, she seemed at these moments ten feet tall.

We rejoice that she lived so long and so well.

Nancy Strong