

Marie Elois Rogers

November 23, 1911 - June 26, 2011

Elois Rogers was a Washington, DC native. Strong-willed and straight-talking, she found herself living out Quaker testimonies early in her adulthood.

During WW II, employees virtually everywhere were urged to buy War Bonds, or United States Government savings bonds. Elois determined that, as a committed pacifist, she could not do so. This led to her termination from her position as a librarian for an insurance company in September, 1942. Traditionally men are acknowledged for acts of conscientious objection, but Elois acted from her strong conscience as well. Fortunately, however, she went on to quickly find employment at the Library of Congress that lasted for 33 years. She joined Friends Meeting of Washington in 1945.

Elois had gumption, and it never left her. And, her long-term friends agreed, neither did her wry sense of humor. To a visitor in 2011 she recalled Friends Meeting of Washington member Harriet Sutton, and chuckled, “When I was new, she wanted to MAKE SURE that I knew about Quakerism. She had meetings with groups of six people to discuss it until they faded out. True, I thought I knew it all.” Her commitment to Friends remained strong for the rest of her life, even beyond her Monthly Meeting. Elois served as Recording Clerk for Baltimore Yearly Meeting – Stony Run (there were still two Yearly Meetings) in the late 1950s.

There is no indication that Elois ever married. She was close to her parents, whom she cared for in their later years. It appears that the Meeting and the wider circle of Friends generally were also her family, along with her co-workers.

Elois knew that managing the Meeting’s business took both tenacious attention to detail and respect for long-term perspectives. Her extensive committee work at Friends Meeting of Washington included service as Clerk of Overseers in the mid-1960s, and she later wrote an article about the history of the Meeting’s counseling service. For a number of years in the mid-1970s, she may have set some kind of record for the Meeting by serving as Recording Clerk, Trustee, and member of both Nominating and Personal Aid Committees all at once! Her honesty led her to speak very frankly in person or in meetings. Others could find this unsettling, but it often revealed much. This is Elois’ writing from 1997, recalling member Ralph Boyer in regard to the long and complicated story of the Ross bequest, from the most recent Meeting history.

They stipulated that Friends Meeting of Washington would inherit a portion of the residue, if any, after all of the servants had died. One by one, they passed away--all except the butler. So every year or so, usually every couple of years, one Trustee or another visited the bank in New Jersey to inquire about the matter. I think Ralph went a time or two, John Jones went. Ellis Williams went. It was all very embarrassing, really awkward. We didn’t wish the man dead, but we didn’t want to lose track of the money,

which was to be used to preserve Sarah Ross' collection of fans if we didn't inherit, and we thought the Meeting could put the money to better use than that.

Elois was, though, deeply spiritual as well. In June 1997, she wrote some recollections of her participation in the "Pathways" group at the Meeting. She wrote, in part:

It went on for years, maybe 15 or 20. I think all of us spoke acceptably in Meeting for Worship at one time or another . . . We read Evelyn Underhill, Jung, a collection called *The Choice is Always Ours*, and other material that we felt would strengthen the life of the Spirit in us . . . We always started off with silence and then discussed what we had read, dropping in and out of silence as led. . . . As I look back on it now, I know that the Pathways group got me through difficult times. I believe that each of us was strengthened by our reading, thinking, and worshipping together. I think that the Meeting also benefited.

Her bemused co-workers reflected at the end of her life that this devotion to her faith may have had unintended consequences throughout her career, not just early on. At the Library of Congress, she was entrusted with cataloguing what was then called the "Delta Collection," the raciest of literature! This is another addition to the long list of surprising careers of Friends Meeting of Washington members.

After she retired, Elois moved to Kendall Crosslands near Philadelphia, and, for a time, moved her membership to a nearby Meeting. But a few years later she moved it back to Washington, saying that was where she truly felt her commitment a member.

She said to a visitor in 2011 that she greatly missed Friends Meeting of Washington, though she realized that few might remember her, and asked to be recalled to Friends there. Both her return to the Meeting and this wish expressed the strong bond and affection of a Friend who was led to make deep commitments, to keep them, and who expected others to do so as well.