

Elisabeth Cotten Memorial Minute

Friends Meeting at Cambridge member Elisabeth Cotten (nee Graf) died on Saturday, August 26, 2023 at age 91. Elisabeth was born in Basel, Switzerland on September 29, 1931.

Elisabeth loved languages, culture, and travel from a young age. She was fluent in five languages. As an exchange student in high school, she lived in England, Holland, and France. After high school, she studied in France and Italy. Elisabeth worked in numerous countries including Finland, Italy, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, the United States, and Canada where she met her husband, George Cotten.

She transferred her membership to Friends Meeting at Cambridge from Stamford (Connecticut) Monthly Meeting on December 12, 1962 along with the memberships of her three young children Janet, Gerald and Richard. Her husband George pre-deceased her on June 5, 2009.

From 1990 to 2002 Elisabeth served faithfully as the FMC Recorder. Elisabeth was a naturalized US citizen. Her resignation from that role in 2002 was precipitated by the Meeting's decision to join the Campaign of Conscience for the Iraqi People. At that time Recorder was an officer of the meeting and as an officer she felt she faced greater personal risk than native-born citizens in regard to possible penalties due to the Meeting's action.

Elisabeth also served on the Center Furnishings Committee and the Exhibits Committee.

For many years, Elisabeth was one of the small group of stalwart regulars at the Brookhaven Worship Group under the care of Friends Meeting at Cambridge. It met outdoors, weather permitting where a few Friends from FMC would sometimes join them, especially during the COVID pandemic when FMC only held worship online. Also, in recent years she served as the contact for the group answering inquiries. One Friend recalled, "Elisabeth was the group's shepherd, phoning me and others every week to say whether they would meet or not. She was amazingly stalwart; I remember her donning coats, gloves, boots, scarves well into December. Only rain kept her away. She arrived early each time, having overseen the set-up of outdoor chairs by Brookhaven staff, and would stay afterwards to chat with visitors. It was clear that other Quaker residents prized her energy and held her in great affection." Happily, she was able to attend worship at Brookhaven the Sunday before she died.

September 10, 2023, when Elisabeth's death was announced, Friends held Elisabeth in the Light and shared memories of her ministry, organization, and care and love for the community.

She is survived by her daughter Janet Feuerman and her husband Brian, son Gerald Cotten and his wife Kimberly, son Richard Cotten and his wife Ann, four grandchildren, and niece and nephew.

A memorial service was held at Brookhaven at Lexington October 20th.