

MARYHELEN “MEL” SNYDER MEMORIAL MINUTE

When Maryhelen “Mel” Hintz Snyder died at 85 years of age on January 23, 2018, a family member tellingly described her as a “powerful force of love and light in the world”. The warmth of her smile and the depth of her concern for others live on in our memories of her. As a poet, artist, therapist, and member of the Society of Friends, Mel Snyder excelled at making connections with and between people.

Mel Snyder was born into a Friends family in Brooklyn New York on October 6, 1932. Her family, Howard and Helen Hintz and their other daughter Anne Kathryn, attended Westbury Friends Meeting in Westbury NY. The Hintz family had settled and lived in the New York City and Connecticut area since the middle of the 19th century. Mel attended Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania where she met Dr. Ross Leland Snyder Jr. who became her husband on September 3, 1955 at Westbury Friends Meeting.

In the early 1960s, Mel and Ross Snyder moved to Albuquerque, NM where Mel became part of the local therapy community, becoming a co-founder and teacher at the Corrales Community School at nearby Corrales, NM. In 1984, after receiving her PhD at the Fielding Institute in Santa Barbara, CA, Mel became more active in therapy and co-counseling in New Mexico. For over forty years, she was very involved in national and local co-counseling groups, as well as a peer support counseling group.

On her personal website, www.onbecominghuman.org, (the phrase is one used by her father-in-law Dr. Ross Snyder Sr.) she described herself as a “psychotherapist and poet specializing in the development of livening and empowering relationships with our partners, our children, our communities, and ourselves.”

Mel and Ross created a family of four children in their 40 years of marriage: Jennifer (born 1958), Susan (1959), James (1962), and Kenneth (1966). Dr. Ross Leland Snyder Jr. died in August 1996, a month before their 41st anniversary.

Mel continued as a therapist and as an active member in Albuquerque Friends Meeting until 2004 when she moved to the Blueberry Hill Co-Housing Community in Vienna, VA. She was a vibrant part of her co-housing community, helping to create a welcoming and compassionate place to live. She was always passionate about creating community and connection wherever she was or with whomever she was.

Mel published a variety of books of poetry, memoirs, and professional works in psychology and counseling. Her four books of poetry are

- **Enough** (1979);
- **Because I Praise** (1998);
- **Sun in an Empty Room** (2012); and
- **Never the Loss of Wings** (2015).

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A chapbook of poems also appeared under the title **Undressing for Rodin**. Mel participated in several poetry groups and in 2016 was named Passager Press's Poet of the Year.

She wrote **No Hole in the Flame** (2008), a memoir of her forty years of marriage to Ross and her coping with his sudden death. Her professional books are **Ethical Issues in Feminist Family Therapy** (1995) and **The Young Child as Person: Nurturing the Development of Healthy Conscience** (2014) written by her late husband and family members and for which Mel wrote an introduction.

Mel brought to her personal life and to her membership in Friends Meetings in Westbury, NY; Manhasset, NY; Albuquerque, NM; and Langley Hill, VA the same concerns and personal abilities that shaped her professional life. She continued to be fully focused on "addressing the development of a fully realized humanness", as she put it on her website.

In Albuquerque Monthly Meeting's letter of transfer of her membership to Langley Hill Friends Meeting, dated April 3, 2005, the clerk of Meeting noted her special achievements in facilitating marriage strengthening groups, sharing her love of poetry in readings on arts evenings at the Meeting, offering deep listening sessions, her caring ways, and her easy connection with young people.

At Langley Hill, Mel Snyder quickly became an integral and unique part of the community. Her vocal ministry was well-received, often speaking about the power of Love. Among her loves was John Woolman, whose connection with the Light she attempted to model in her own life. She enjoyed intimate conversations about living in the Spirit, especially in the hour before Meeting for Worship during the "Drop In" session with a small group of Seekers and in Langley Hill's Spiritual Formation group, speaking her mind and Truth. She was called to serve on the Ministry and Worship committee for seven years, two of them as clerk of the committee.

Mel Snyder was one of the founders and guiding forces of the book discussion group at Langley Hill. Mel was also central to the creation of the Working Group on Racism at Langley Hill Friends Meeting in 2006 with another Langley Hill Friend that challenged the Meeting to explore the challenges of diversity and to realize that racism is a barrier to Friends' relationship with the Divine. Mel trained with other friends in the Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) and in 2008 attended the AVP international conference in Kenya, working with residents of IDP camps to facilitate their peaceful return to their homes. One of Mel Snyder's passions was to increase her own awareness and the awareness of others regarding white privilege and racism.

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In 2010, Mel Snyder received a travel letter commending her and another Friend to Friends in Kenya on a visit to the United Society of Friends Women International conference in Mombasa and visits to Friends Theological College and local Friends Meetings. During that trip Mel and another Friend from Langley Hill joined in teaching classes on mental health and substance abuse at Friends Theological College.

Mel also worked with Langley Hill Friends Meeting to address issues of support for attenders and members with hearing challenges. In her last years, she campaigned for supportive assistance to ease the isolation of those with hearing loss, including herself. In an eloquent article entitled "Loving" in Friends Journal of March 2016 she described her personal challenges in making clear the isolation she felt in Meeting because of increasing deafness and her joy as the Meeting worked to support hearing challenged members through supportive hearing technology. Mel's physical limitation and a desire to avoid driving long distances at night provided others numerous opportunities for shared car rides with deep conversations about life, its joy and its struggles.

As so many times before, Maryhelen Hintz Snyder excelled again at making the personal comprehensible to those around her and to bringing positive change to one of her communities.

Mel is survived by her children, Jennifer Zito (Bill Carlson), Susan (Michael Greenlick), James (Lori Barfield), Kenneth (Beth Conover); her grandchildren Jesse, Stephen, and Michael Bradford, Abby Criswell, Jessica and Hannah Snyder, James, Bill and Mellie Zito, Jeremy and Ross Snyder; great-grandchildren Shaia Rose and Arlo Hastings; and by communities of Friends and friends everywhere she has lived.