

Eileen Long memorial minute

Eileen Long was born in Everett, WA on May 1, 1928 and lived in Washington State for most of her life.

Eileen's father died when she was just one and a half, so she and her older brother grew up with a single, working mother at a time when that was quite unusual. Eileen was proud of her independence as a teenager who could cook, sew, and get herself from place to place without a car.

Eileen left Everett to attend the University of Washington in Seattle, where she flourished. She engaged with "a rainbow of people," including in a sorority and in a club for international students. During this time Eileen attended University Friends Meeting and volunteered in an AFSC work camp.

After graduating from college, Eileen went to Houston, TX for her first job, and experienced culture shock in the southern climate of racism. She worked for the YMDCA and decided to go to graduate school in social work, despite advice from people of two genders that she find a husband and start a family. During graduate school in Cleveland, OH Eileen found Quaker worship to be "a centering sanctuary in the midst of growth and change."

During a summer visit with her family, Eileen met Bill Long. They saw each other for folk dancing, hiking, and camping, and were engaged during Eileen's winter break from graduate school. They were married the following summer, and their marriage lasted until Bill's death in 2014 after a long illness.

After six years in Seattle, Bill took a job in southern California. Eileen took a temporary position in an adoption agency, covering for a maternity leave. When that leave was up, the agency offered Eileen a permanent position. As she remembered near the end of her life, Eileen replied, "I'd rather have a baby." Cynthia and Michael arrived in 1959 and 1961, arriving in the family as infants.

The expanded family returned to Seattle so Bill could attend law school. Eileen was glad to be back in the Northwest, "near family and old friends, the mountains and the salt water, where people cared for the earth and each other."

In 1965 Eileen established a pioneering Head Start program in Seattle's Black central district. She served as its director and as a field work instructor for social work students. In 1974 she wrote this about a painful struggle there with a complex committee situation: "It really shattered a part of me that really wanted it to end up roses and sunshine."

In 1971 Eileen's mother developed terminal cancer and moved into the Long home with Eileen, Bill and their children. Writing a few years later, Eileen remembered this time as "a beautiful year, rich with loving and caring and courage."

Eileen played many important roles in University Friends Meeting, where she grew to be a beloved elder. She served on most of the Meeting's committees at one time or another. She decorated our tables beautifully with flowers and foliage from her garden for evens from holiday potlucks to memorial services, and brought flowers and garden produce to share as often as

she had a surplus. In the wider Quaker community, Friends remember Eileen for her extraordinary collection of beautiful beads and her generosity in teaching others how to create jewelry with them. Her last box of beads went to Pacific Northwest Quarterly Meeting, where children work with them in the fall and the spring.

In the 1980s, Eileen led University Meeting in developing our Quaker Experiential Service and Training program (QuEST) in our white elephant of a house across the parking lot from the Meetinghouse. For over thirty years groups of young people came to Seattle after college for a year of service in non-profit social change organizations, while living in community at Quaker House.

Eileen said that, as she looked back on her life, founding and supporting the QuEST program as more difficult than any of her jobs for pay, and her proudest accomplishment. The world is richer for her work, as QuEST fellows have taken their learning from their Quaker years into the world (and we have gained a few Quakers, too.) Eileen was delighted to receive letters, calls, and visits from a number of QuESTies who heard she had entered hospice care. Many of them shared memories of gardening with Eileen, who joyfully passed along the knowledge and skills she developed over decades as a gardener.

In 2015 Eileen joined the Way of the Spirit, a Quaker spiritual study and discernment program. During this time, traveling to Oregon and back for retreats, she deepened her friendship with Jana Ostrom. Eileen and Jana recognized their friendship as a gift of spiritual accompaniment, and it continued through the rest of Eileen's life.

Eileen died on January 10, 2026. In addition to her Quaker community, she is survived by her daughter Cynthia Long (and her husband, Casey Allen), and her son, Michael Long (and his wife, Frederique Long, grandson Matthieu Long), great grandson Gordon Boyd, and niece and nephew Naomi and Jon Parry.