



Introduction

The news on Saturday, August 22, 2009, that Muriel Duckworth had died in her one hundred and first year set wires buzzing across Canada. People wanted to talk about their experience of her. Some gave interviews to the media; others came together or phoned each other. In the weeks following, memorial services were held at Austin, Quebec, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. All of us recognized that her passing marked the end of an era, but I sense that we came together not only to remember her but to testify to Muriel's ongoing legacy of love.

In 1996 I was delighted when Fernwood published the biography of Muriel that I had written. *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active Pacifist* was inspired by my devotion to her. I'd had the opportunity to be close to her for twenty years in Halifax. Muriel caused a significant change in my life, as I am sure she did for many, when in 1978 she introduced me to the peace movement through the Voice of Women, a national peace organization. Muriel became my role model in countless ways. She reinforced the best of my social work education as I watched her practise adult education in both small informal groups and the large organizations she helped to found. Her warm relationships with everyone were at once spontaneous yet carefully tended. Her behaviour was rooted in her principles, and her love for so many individuals reflected her love for humanity. She combined gentleness, tenacity, humour and fearlessness. Muriel became the mother I had never known since my own mother died when I was a young child. I expect she was a mother figure to many other women too. I, among thousands of Canadians, treasured her friendship. We responded by giving the best we had to bring peace to the world.

In the years when I was writing her biography, Muriel was accessible to me at both her home in Halifax and her cottage in Austin, Quebec.

Then I moved away to Vancouver and Ottawa when my husband retired and only saw her for brief periods when we returned in the summertime to our Maritime home. Because I had been spending less time with her, I asked some of Muriel's family members and friends to share their memories of her during the last dozen years of her life. I knew there was more to her story than when I had left off in 1996, and I wanted readers of her biography to know about her closing years. Having reached old age myself, as I read these essays, Muriel remains my model of how an aging lifetime activist can support and inspire younger activists and be a significant elder in her family.

These memories from "near and dear ones" are tales of Muriel's humour, deep affection for her family, outreach to people, ongoing activism despite her advanced age and lasting political "feistiness." They also relate her views on education, religion, death, war and love. As emails and letters poured in and as I re-read the eulogies people had given at Muriel's memorials, I felt called to arrange these memories into a huge bouquet of flowers for presentation to Muriel. This task eased my sad heart whenever I thought I would like to phone her for one of our frequent chats. I hope these beautiful writings bring as much enjoyment and solace to the contributors and the readers as they do to me.

For their pieces, I am grateful to Mariel Angus, Colleen Ashworth, Suellen Bradfield, Fatima Cajee, Jean Cooper, Micheline Delorme, Anna Duckworth, Eleanor Duckworth, John Duckworth, Martin Duckworth, Marya Duckworth, Sylvia Duckworth, Tiffany Duckworth, Sandy Greenberg, Martin Rudy Haase, Marie Hammond-Callaghan, Pat Kipping, Bonnie Klein, Marie Koehler, Megan Leslie, Helen Lofgren, Heather Menzies, Margaret Murphy, Elaine Newman, Marion Pape, Ruth Plumpton, Betty Peterson, Anana Rydwald, Audrey Schirmer, Danielle Schirmer, Norma Scott, Errol Sharpe, Donna Smyth, Barbara Taylor, Gillian Thomas, Maureen Vine, Anne Wonham and Anne Marie Zilliacus. For pictures, I am grateful to Michael Bradfield, Jean Cooper, Micheline Delorme, John Duckworth, Kathleen Flanagan, David Henry, Joan Brown Hicks, Pat Kipping, Terre Nash, Ruth Plumpton, Betty Peterson, Pauline Raven and Maureen Vine.

Errol Sharpe of Fernwood gave me his generous encouragement

when I approached him about doing an addition to Muriel's biography. His patience knew no bounds as I proposed one idea after another. He went one better by offering to publish a separate book. Thus was born *A Legacy of Love*. Beverley Rach, the production coordinator, made my way as easy as possible as she helped me gather pictures and assigned the publishing work. Brenda Conroy, the book's designer, not only caught my editing errors but turned out this beautiful copy. I am also grateful to Nancy Malek for her promotion and to John van der Woude for his design of the book's cover. Finally, I was delighted when Sandor Fizli agreed to let us use his beautiful portrait of Muriel on the cover. He captured her pensive mood, which in turn captures our hearts.

The title of this collection is drawn from my own memory of Muriel when we celebrated her seventy-fifth birthday in Halifax in 1987. Wearing a lovely rose gown, Muriel stood atop a circular coffee table so that she could see everyone in the crowd of over two hundred well-wishers. She thanked us all for coming and said, as she looked around at old friends and new, that she wished she might personally introduce each one of us to the other and tell us how very special every one of us was. She reciprocated our love and wanted to link each and every one of us to the other and to have us all appreciate each other. This is how I personally experience Muriel's legacy of love. When all of us who knew Muriel or wish we had known her join together we will make a difference.

Visiting her one September morning of her last year, I jokingly reminded her that she had said at her seventy-fifth birthday that she wanted to live to be a hundred because she was curious to see how it would all turn out. (I think she hopefully expected that things would get better and that the world would be closer to peace.) Now, she looked at me sadly, shook her head and, on the verge of tears, said, "No, I don't have to live this long to see how it is turning out." Of course she was distressed by the wars still going on, and I was upset with myself for inadvertently causing her to feel this pain. I quickly changed the subject. I wish I had said that she continued to show us the way, although I realize we still have a long way to go to move from war and hatred to love and peace.

Many of us heard Muriel repeat in her later years, "WAR IS STUPID!" and "WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS MORE LOVE!" She distilled the wis-

dom of all her years into the pure gold of these words. And she insisted that we all have to stand up and speak out against injustice and inequality. Muriel, who had given hundreds of speeches, written thousands of letters, organized and attended countless meetings, she who spoke with such moving eloquence, still had a message to convey until her last days. I sense the message is that only love will conquer war. Muriel convinced me that what each of us needs and what the world needs is more love. Joyfully we will spend her legacy as we bring peace and justice to the world.

This collection of remembrances from friends and family about Muriel's later years also contains stories of her earlier life. This series of memories, eulogies and pictures of Muriel is a companion piece to the biography, *Muriel Duckworth: A Very Active Pacifist*, published by Fernwood in 1996. Joining these two books in my mind's eye, I picture Muriel's life as a tapestry where we can trace threads from the beginning to the end, showing us how this ordinary woman became so extraordinary and what made her so beloved and so inspiring to those of us who knew her. For readers not acquainted with the biography, the following is a summary of her life story.

Muriel Helena Ball was born on October 31, 1908, on a farm in the Eastern Townships at Austin, Quebec, the third of five children. When she was nine her family moved to the town of Magog, eleven miles down the lake. Muriel, a shy studious child, grew up loving nature and the rhythm of the seasons. Relatives and friends often gathered in her family's home for hymn sings, card games, good meals and political debates. Her feminist roots went back to a mother who read Nellie McClung, who turned her china cabinet into a bookcase to start up a community lending library and who helped earn the money for her children to go to university by running a tea room and renting rooms to summer boarders.

Muriel credited the Student Christian Movement (SCM) at McGill as the most important part of her university education. She was active in small study groups, in opposing anti-Semitism on campus and in helping raise money for European student relief. At the SCM she met Jack Duckworth. They married the week of her graduation in 1929, and both did graduate studies for the next year at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in New York. In the vibrant atmosphere at UTS, progressive faculty

members were readily accessible to students. It was a time when the “social gospel” permeated theological studies, when the sudden market crash threw the economic system into question, when psychiatric concepts were being introduced and when students were exposed to speakers from other world religions. There was even a beginning dialogue between Christians and Marxists. Students engaged in field work, and Muriel’s eyes were opened by her weekly sessions with teenaged immigrant girls at a community church in Hell’s Kitchen on the Lower East Side. From this came a lifetime ability to instill confidence in young women.

Returning to Montreal, Jack went to work for the YMCA, and Muriel became secretary to the SCM until their first child, Martin, was born in 1931. She was busy with the family for the next few years, with Eleanor born in 1935 and John in 1938, but found time to involve herself with Jack in the League for Social Reconstruction — forerunner to the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and later the New Democratic Party (NDP). Muriel attended the conference that led to the establishment of the CCF. The Duckworth home was the site of meetings for two other organizations, the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, a graduate version of the SCM, and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist organization begun in Britain after World War I. Remembering the lessons of that war, Jack and Muriel actively resisted the advent of World War II. Jack was a declared pacifist, and Muriel supported his stand over the objections of friends and family. Instead of engaging in volunteer activities supporting the war effort, Muriel remained busy throughout wartime starting up children’s nursery schools, home and school associations and children’s art classes and working with the Canadian Girls in Training. The horror of war touched home when her younger brother Norman, who had joined the Air Force, was killed returning from a raid over France in 1943.

The family moved to Halifax in 1947, when Jack became the general secretary of the new family YMCA. Muriel did volunteer work in community mental health activities and human rights for African Nova Scotians. From 1948 to 1962, she joined the progressive staff of the Adult Education Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Education. She worked full time for the department until she resigned from her paid work in 1967 to become the national president of the Voice of Women (VOW).

Muriel and Peggy Hope-Simpson had started a Halifax branch of VOW in response to a call from Toronto women to form a women's organization to do something about the failure of the Paris Peace talks in 1960. In their first month they called a public meeting to successfully contest the dumping of nuclear waste off the coast of Yarmouth, N.S. The activities of VOW occupied an increasing share of Muriel's attention. As national president, she chaired the Women's International Peace Conference in Montreal in 1967. During her term, the Voices, who opposed the war in Vietnam, captured public attention when they brought three South Vietnamese women from the National Liberation Front to Canada. Muriel accompanied them across the country to packed public meetings in the major cities and at border points between Canada and the United States. There they met with delegations of U.S. women working for peace. Muriel represented VOW at conferences in Paris in 1967, Moscow in 1968, Mexico City in 1975 and Copenhagen in 1980.

Muriel led a delegation of Voices in 1968 to meet the director general of the Suffield Experimental Station to protest Canada's involvement in chemical weapons testing. The women went to explore the agreement between Canada, Great Britain and the U.S. on chemical and biological warfare research and its connection to U.S. chemical warfare in Vietnam.

Muriel was equally at home in small discussion groups and in the full plenary sessions of large meetings. In the early days of VOW Ursula Franklin remarked that Muriel's attendance at meetings meant that standards were ensured. When contention arose she would talk with all parties in a dispute and attempt to come up with a proposal acceptable to everyone. On rare occasions she dissolved into tears.

In 1976 Muriel was a founding member of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW), begun primarily by academic women. Muriel became an enthusiastic supporter of the notion of community-based research by and for women. Because she saw CRIAOW as a bridge between academic researchers and community activists she remained on the board of directors for five years and was elected president for the years 1979 to 1980.

Muriel gained spiritual strength from becoming associated with the Quakers (Friends) in Halifax in 1962. The simplicity of the Quaker ap-

proach, with their silent Meeting for Worship and their view of themselves as searching for the truth, appealed to her. She could relate to a Quaker tenet that there is “that of God in every person” and that each of us has an “inner light” that guides us. Although Muriel and Jack attended the Friends’ Meetings regularly and took on responsibility at the Meetings, it was not until 1975, after Jack’s death, that she officially joined the Religious Society of Friends. For several years Muriel did not publicly identify herself as a Quaker in her work in the peace movement because she did not want people to think that only Quakers were “for peace” or that you had to be a Quaker “to be for peace.” Nevertheless the influence of the Quakers was strong in the Voice of Women as a number of its most active leaders were themselves Friends.

In addition to her volunteer work in the peace movement, Muriel’s political involvement in the community expanded when she became one of the founding members of the Movement for Citizens’ Voice and Action (MOVE) in Halifax in 1971, and its chair in 1972. This organization began as a citizens’ coalition publicly protesting the lack of promised public participation in the Regional Municipal Plan for the cities of Halifax and Dartmouth. During the next six years Muriel was seen as the cement that held together a coalition of broadly based community groups. She was a strong advocate for the interests of the economically marginalized. The education Muriel received in MOVE and the public profile she earned in those years were instrumental in her running for the NDP in the provincial election of 1974, as the first woman candidate in Halifax. While her workload with MOVE was still very heavy, three weeks before the election she agreed to run and, at age sixty-five, undertook the arduous activity of door-to-door campaigning. Muriel received visible support from women and from university students. She did not win but obtained close to 20 percent of the vote in the riding, a previous Conservative stronghold.

Muriel found that she had to work very hard to be taken seriously, even by the men in her own party. On the subjects of education, foreign policy and the status of women she was clearly a leader in shaping NDP policy. She was a prime mover at the federal convention of 1981, where a resolution was passed stating that an NDP government would not participate in the NATO alliance.

The 1980s were filled with Muriel's participation in international meetings for peace. As a pacifist feminist Muriel helped to make Canadian women think about the cost of the arms race and about war as the ultimate instrument of violence against them. Returning from the unofficial parallel conference of the United Nations International Conference on Women in June 1955 in Mexico City, attended by 8000 women, she reported: "On the whole I didn't feel that the people from North America had the same sense of urgency about disarmament as the people did from the developing countries, to whom armament means wars ... They are just destroyed by wars. ... Their progress gets set back by armament...." At this same conference Muriel led an action of the Canadian women delegates in support of an aboriginal woman, Mary Two-Axe Earley, who was threatened with eviction from the Kahnawake reserve because, according to Canadian law, she had lost her status as an Indian upon her marriage to a white man. The publicity they generated resulted in worldwide support for the cause of First Nations women in Canada.

In 1982 Muriel represented CRIAW at the invitation of the Department of External Affairs on a Canadian women's study tour, with visits to NATO headquarters in Paris and to the Canadian Forces Base in Lahr, Germany. The women were mainly taken to briefings about obscure non-military agencies of NATO. Muriel used many occasions to counteract the propagandist nature of the tour and uncovered the fact that NATO spent less than 1 percent of its budget on non-military activities.

That same year Muriel and Ann Gertler presented a lengthy statement on behalf of VOW to the House of Commons Standing Committee for External Affairs and National Defence. Their evidence showed that militarism deprives women of funds to meet daily human needs.

Over 200 members of VOW attended a giant rally at the United Nations Second Special Session on Disarmament on June 12, 1982, when a million people marched for peace from the U.N. buildings to Central Park. Muriel and Betty Peterson led a delegation presenting a petition of 125,000 signatures of Canadian women across Canada to Gerard Pelletier, Canadian ambassador to the U.N.

After convalescing for almost a year from a near-fatal illness, Muriel went to Japan in August 1983, accompanied by Suellen Bradfield, to attend

Hiroshima Day and the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. She brought home many moving tales of the Hiroshima survivors she had met. In 1984 she returned to Moscow to take part in the NFB film, *Speaking Our Peace*. Muriel was the soul of the Women's International Peace Conference at Mount St. Vincent University, in Halifax, in June 1985, where 350 women from every continent gathered to examine and advocate women's alternatives for negotiating peace. She had worked tirelessly for nearly two years to support this initiative.

In August 1985 she joined a fact-finding Mission for Peace to Central America at the request of a coalition sponsored by labour unions, CUSO and Oxfam. As part of the delegation she visited five countries in two weeks, interviewing over a hundred people. She returned home to organize meetings to speak about the information the mission had gathered.

Well into the 1990s, Muriel helped to plan and organize a great many peace demonstrations, marches, silent vigils and petitions. Although she never had to go to jail for her pacifist beliefs, she did land in a federal tax court in 1989, when she was eighty, for withholding about 9 percent of her federal income tax over several years — the portion she figured the country used for war preparations. She argued unsuccessfully: “For two hundred years Canada has allowed young men not to be conscripted if they objected on conscientious grounds.... I feel that neither should my money be conscripted for this purpose.”

Anyone who worked alongside of Muriel experienced her energizing force. Muriel was associated with a great many organizations and was one of the founders of seventeen provincial and national groups. Her support to individual women was legendary, her leadership motivating and her encouragement constant. Many institutions recognized Muriel's contributions to adult education, community development, human rights and women's and peace studies. She was given a dozen doctorates from universities across Canada, was a member of the Order of Canada and received the Person's Award and the Pearson Peace Medal. It was typical of Muriel that whenever she was honoured, she managed to turn the award into an occasion for honouring others. When she received the Order of Canada in 1983 she accepted it as a symbol of recognition for the women's peace movement.