

**The Heritage Project
Presbyterian Women’s Stories
Volume I**

The Heritage Project arose from a discussion of amazing Presbyterian women that we know or have known. The goal of the PW PNNE Heritage Project is to capture the memories, wisdom, and experiences of many of the women in our Presbytery and gather these together in some format available to women throughout the Church.

We will be discussing it in more depth at our Women’s Retreat, so we are introducing this exciting new venture to you with our first interview.

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Melva Geores

By Linda Pappin and Joanna Damon
Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church
Topsham, Maine



On February 12, 2010, Linda Pappin and I, Joanna Damon, had the great pleasure of speaking with Melva Geores as a first step in the Heritage Project.

Melva's involvement with Presbyterian women (with a small "w") began when her husband Carl and she were called by the citizens of Leeds, Maine, which had not enjoyed regular worship services for two generations. Carl was then appointed to Leeds by the National Board of Missions. The dilapidated church which greeted them when they arrived in 1952 was later bought for one dollar. They came to think that it had been overpriced but it was renovated in 1960. They had come from a rural community that had lost its church so they were in sympathy with the plight of the people of Leeds. Churches were organized at Leeds and Wales and later at Hartford. He was a bundle of energy and reveled in the work. He later became the second director of the Mission at the

Eastward (MATE) which also included the churches at North Turner, Starks, West Mills and New Portland, North New Portland and Farmington.

Melva joined the local Ladies Circle which made aprons, quilts, and other handcrafted goods. This group became the Mother's Group. There were several young mothers and lots of children; Melva and Carl had six and other women in the group had as many or more. They held bake sales and did other things to raise money much as we all do today.

The Mother's Group merged with the United Presbyterian Women in the 1950s. Melva gives credit for this move to Ellen Blackwell. She said that Ellen encouraged the group all along the way. They were intrepid women. With a chuckle Melva told how in the 1920s the women asked the General Assembly to be allowed to form a group of their own and they were laughed at. A comment was made, "the next thing you know they'll want to be ministers."

Encouraged by Ellen, Melva attended the national "Gathering" at Purdue in the 1970s, and she says that her life was never the same after that. She was so inspired by the fellowship of so many women gathered together that although she was an introvert she took on leadership roles, including Moderator of the Presbyterian of Northern New England and later Moderator for the Presbyterian Women of the Synod of the Northeast. She served in these capacities with warmth and humor as she does everything but the effort always left her exhausted.

Melva says she also felt compelled to serve because of the great support given to the MATE churches by the women of the national church who sent clothes and helped in other ways. She felt she owed them so much.

Melva spoke to us of all the things women of the church were able to accomplish when they pooled their resources. They boycotted Nestles for selling formula in the third world; they took on racial issues and supported peace initiatives. She worries that with mission efforts being concentrated in local churches we will look inward and become more parochial and will lose an international awareness.

She praised Horizons Magazine and suggested that churches form discussion groups around the articles which would help us keep an outward focus. She called for Presbyterian women at each level to model for those following, and she stressed the importance of supporting the next generation. She also said that we should be realistic and know that the younger women we are looking for will most likely be in their 50s.

Finally, Melva described the time she has had since her husband died as a period of grace. She misses him terribly, but now that she has put everything in order she has time to think about her own life and to design her own future.

Sue Harmon

By Nancy Donnelly



I have known Sue for at least 7 years, maybe more. I met her in her capacity as guest preacher in some of the nearby Presbyterian churches.

She was always so pleasant and welcoming to me, but more important, so accommodating, and very willing to adjust the music for the worship service.

Later we met again in Presbyterian Women, an organization she loved, and to which she was dedicated.

We worked together on committees, and again I found her to be most helpful. She was always willing to do what needed to be done.

Willingness and helpfulness. What great qualities! We could always count on Sue. But what made her contributions unique to Presbyterian Women was her musical ability. No matter what the event was, she was there, providing the music. She played at annual meetings, at the yearly retreat, and at the committee meetings. It was never a problem for

her. She never refused and she could play anything.

Janet Urie

By Carolyn L Shields



Janet and her husband Donald reared five children on their 90-milking-cow dairy farm in the Craftsbury/Glover area of northern Vermont. They were members of the East Craftsbury Presbyterian Church which had its roots in a Scottish immigrant community. Janet was active in the Women's Missionary Society and after the union in UPW. Locally she served as one of the leaders of the White-Hill missionary group for teenagers and was elected an elder in the East Craftsbury Church.

She enjoyed the financial aspects of organizations and for many years was treasurer of the local library and the East Hill preschool. At PWNNE, she kept busy as treasurer and more recently auditor. As an early woman elder she was elected Stated Clerk of the Presbytery from 1959-1965. "I did the paperwork and Doc Hale knew the rules."

Janet reported that attending Missionary Society in the late 30's meant rising between 3 and 4 AM and

driving with Jean Simpson, Helen Rowell and daughters, Louise and Eunice to meetings often held in New Hampshire or Northern Massachusetts. "We wrote to and adopted missionaries and sent money."

Josephine White, who was martyred while protecting medical supplies from bandits in Afghanistan, and Alice Hill, who served the church in Pakistan, were two missionaries from the Craftsbury area who received this support. "We had awfully good meals and we never worried about family; they took care of themselves. It was probably a good idea to leave them. Janet particularly enjoyed Ellen Blackwell and stayed overnight at her home on occasion. "Ellen wondered what we did in the country."

Josephine White

-Adapted from History of United Presbyterian Church, East Craftsbury VT-
By Carolyn L. Shields

Josephine White deserves a special tribute for her dedicated and courageous life in mission. A member of the Presbyterian Church in East Craftsbury, she graduated from our denominational college in Sterling, Kansas in 1950.

She served in Pakistan from 1951, as a lab technician in a hospital there. Later she taught lab and supervised hospital construction. In 1968 she went to work with the Medical Assistance (MAP) in Afghanistan. Quoting from a letter sent by the mission office during her home furlough in 1970, "She is Called, Dedicated, Spiritual and Concerned..."

To know how vitally concerned she was, she took a course in auto mechanics the first semester of her furlough. Have you seen her pictures? It makes your heart skip a beat to see the overloaded trucks ditched on the side of a bank of a deserted, rocky, horrible road. One needs the patience of Job to take all one's medical and personal supplies to go into the hinterland to bring health to the bodies and souls of sick, poverty-stricken men, women and children.



There are no garages, AAA's, or anyone to call on to help repair a damaged vehicle. Josephine can and will do the job. Do you know she earned her way through college as a 'grease Monkey' changing tires and everything else needed in a gas station garage? In the summers, she drove a milk truck. She's very practical, very down to earth; very feminine and very fun loving.

You and I can encourage our representative by giving graciously for the Josephine White Medical Unit. I have \$1,961.71 towards a car. She wants to get a Land-Rover with heavy duty springs, etc. which she will pick up in England.

In fact, she returned to Afghanistan overland from Western Europe in the fall of 1970 with a four-wheel drive Toyota and a Land Rover with medical supplies on a trailer. On August 9, 1971 she was fatally shot near a lake outside Kabul in an apparent robbery attempt. According to Dr. Christy Wilson, who was in Kabul a few days following her death, she and a female assistant were motioned to stop at a "checkpoint" by two mujahedeen, one of whom was

armed. Josephine decided to run through their roadblock since they appeared set on commandeering the car. The armed man shot her through the windshield. The incident was not at all clear as the two men were never caught. She was a remarkable woman and a great inspiration to all who knew her.

Felicia McLaren

December 22, 1924 — October 9, 2008



It was at the Spring Gathering / Retreat held at Rockcraft UCC Conference Center on Lake Sebago, Maine, that I had the opportunity to speak about Felicia's intention to retire into an assisted living facility in Pennsylvania, where she would be nearer to relatives. I felt words of comfort and appreciation should be given to her at that

moment in time. I asked specifically for this special time and was granted this opportunity.

At that time, I spoke about Felicia's long years of service and of her loyalty to the work of the Presbyterian Women; locally in her Barnet Vermont Church, in the Presbytery, in the Synod of New England, and in church-wide Gatherings.

I also spoke of the quiet manner in which she served whenever she was asked to take on the responsibilities of office.

For many years, she and I were fortunate to serve together as officers and planners within the Presbytery. It was always a challenge to keep interest high in our unique, four-state Presbytery. This was a challenge that Felicia consistently met. That evening in Maine she and I said our personal goodbyes, knowing full well that we were seeking God's presence in both of our lives. Felicia was a woman and a good friend, who will be greatly missed.

*Ellen Blackwell
Eliot Presbyterian Church
Lowell, MA*

The Heritage Project: Presbyterian Women's Stories

By Sally Stebbins/Bedford Presbyterian Church

Doris Spurway

Serving Bedford Presbyterian Church and the Town of Bedford for more than 60 years!



Bedford Presbyterian Church and the citizens of our town are blest that a midwestern city girl decided a very long time ago to make the small rural town of Bedford her home. Although she was raised in Detroit, Michigan, she and her husband moved to the Northeast when he accepted employment in Manchester, NH. They loved the rural lifestyle of this little town, and in time, purchased a local Bedford farmhouse in which Doris has lived for over 60 years. Their family, which includes two sons, became active in town affairs and, at the invitation of friends was led to make Bedford Presbyterian Church (the only church in town!) their new faith home.

Doris has always enjoyed reading, so a part-time position as assistant librarian was a perfect job for her. This part-time job became a 25-year commitment. She worked at the library from 1956-1981, through two library expansions and a significant increase in the number of residents using the facility. Doris served as the town's School District Clerk, Supervisor of the Voter Checklist, and as Bedford Cemetery Trustee. Her most fascinating job, from 1953 to 1974, was as one of four "Red Phone Operators" a position that no longer exists since the town has a superior fully manned emergency system. The women would cover the red phone and when a fire broke out, residents would call into the number, the location and type of fire. The operator would then individually notify the volunteer fire fighters.

Doris is a founding member and past president of the Bedford Historical Society, which she was instrumental in starting in 1967. In 1971 Doris commenced a committee to research and complete a history of Bedford, which incorporated two previous volumes from 1850 and 1903. This volume had a treasured place in many Bedford homes.

From her first year of membership in 1949, Doris has been very involved in the activities of Bedford Presbyterian Church. She has served as an Elder, Deacon, Sunday School Teacher and administrator, Clerk of Session, and has been a member of the Memorial Committee since its inception in the 1070s. For 30 years, she served as the church secretary assisting

three different pastors, and she is past president and currently a director of the Women's Fellowship and Ministry Circle, formerly the Ladies Circle Group. Doris and her husband were also active members of the church social group, the Unity Club. As past church archivist, Doris was instrument in ensuring that the church expansion included a room dedicated to the church archives and items of historical significance. She wrote the church history, "Book of Remembrance", for the 250th anniversary of the church founding, 1749-1999. One of her proudest achievements is the listing of Bedford Presbyterian Church on the National Register Of Historic Places.

In these and so many ways, Doris Peck Spurway is the equivalent of a living history book. We of this church and town are indeed so blest that she calls Bedford home!

Louise Grant

By Martha Hodgkins/Leeds Presbyterian Church



Louise Grant is a Founding Member of the Leeds Community Church. She was born in Medford, Massachusetts on June 21, 1911. Her family moved to Maine and they lived in Freeport. She graduated from Freeport High School and went on to graduate from Gorham Normal College. Louise taught in a one-room school in Freeport. She married Alden Grant and they have four children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren that are all precious to her.

Louise and Alden moved to Leeds in 1952. This is the same time that the Reverend Carl Geores and his wife, Melva, moved to Leeds. Rev. Carl was sent by the Presbyterian Mission from New York. The Leeds Church had been vacant for decades. On a visit with Louise and Alden, Carl asked them about people in Leeds and Louise said, "I thought you'd give us some insight about Leeds!" Carl and Melva became good friends with Louise and Alden.

Louise taught school for many years at the Leeds Primary School. She retired in 1978. Along the way, she has held many positions in the Leeds Church, including being a Sunday School teacher.

Polly Wright

A High Flying, High Achieving, and Dedicated PW

By Barbara H. Cooper/Kearsarge Community Presbyterian Church



My interview of Polly Wright was a delight. Polly has led a most interesting life and was gracious to share some her life story with us. She was born in Winona, Mississippi, in Polly's words "a little town with a big Presbyterian church." Her childhood was spent both in Mississippi and Louisiana. She attended church from an early age and has Christian roots as far back as her great-great-grandfather. He was a Methodist Episcopal circuit preacher, travelling around on horseback to carry God's word throughout Tennessee, New Orleans, and other parts south. Polly doesn't have any pictures of him, but she does have diaries of his dating back to his travels during the civil war. When Polly was very young she was taught Presbyterian catechism by her Grand Aunt. She recalled being taught by her aunt in a very small church building and rehearsing the numerous questions and answers with her parents when she went home. As you can see, Presbyterianism runs deep in Polly's roots.

Polly graduated from Mississippi University with a major in French and a minor in Spanish. Polly and her husband, Don, have lived in many different places over the years, and it was in 1973 that they settled in New Hampshire. They were the main initial force behind the establishment of a Presbyterian church in New London, NH, beginning in 1979, and were key players among the 74 founding members of the Kearsarge Community Presbyterian Church which was chartered in 1988. It is no understatement to say that without Polly and Don there would very likely not be a KCPC here today. Polly helped to establish a PW group at the new church which is still active and thriving today. Polly was active in the early days of PW PNNE and served as moderator of the PW PNNE from 1996 to 1999.

Polly remains very active in KCPC and in activities of the PW there. She has been moderator of KCPC's PW and is also a founding member of "The Pilgrims", a women's bible study and prayer group which meets regularly at the church. She also sings in the church choir. Her latest thought is to start something that involves getting to know the new people at our church. It would involve inviting these members to come to her house for informal snacks or a light meal after church from time to time. And not necessarily only the new people! She would include many members in the church that one just doesn't get a chance to know as people. It could add a new dimension that you don't find just in Sunday services. That's Polly, always thinking of new ways to reach out, to connect and share God's gifts.

Polly has some advice for the younger women: “Take advantage of the various groups within your church. It's important to get together as a group to study and share. This is the setting where women really get to know each other and then share their faith and grow in it. These are the people who will be there when help is needed. Find ways that the members of the group can reach out to the community. For example, volunteer in programs like the VNA's Respite program for caregivers. Spiritual growth happens when we help others in need.”

When asked what her dream for PW is, Polly had no trouble responding. She told me “My dream for the future of PW is to see PW become an important part of the life of all the women of our churches. I would like to see more women attending Presbytery, Synod and Church wide gatherings. This gives the feeling of solidarity of PW when we see that we're not out here alone but are a part of a large sisterhood of Christian women. Much can be learned from meeting with women who have years of experience in PW and who come from other areas. Workshops are available to increase the knowledge of potential leaders and wonderful spiritual programs are presented that leave a lasting impression. I'll never forget the sound of 5,000 women singing at a Church wide gathering.”

Polly has worked, and continues to work to achieve many of these goals for the women of KCPC. We see the fruits of her efforts all around us. KCPC and PW-PNNE have benefitted for many years from her talented and gracious presence, and we look forward to many more.

So, now you know about the high achieving part of Polly, and the dedicated PW part too. The high flying part? Polly started her professional life as an airline stewardess serving on international flights for Pan Am! Pretty high flying indeed.

Pastor Peggi Boyce

By Rev. Diane Hoppe Hugo/ Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church

If you were present at the Presbytery Meeting in New Boston this past December, then you got to experience “Pastor Peggi.” Peggi Boyce preached in her own unique fashion – as if she was speaking directly to each one of us.

Many of us looked forward to watching this spunky, spirit-filled lady take over the Moderator’s gavel as she was installed at that meeting but it was not to be. God called her home.

If you were present at the Presbytery Meeting in Haverhill this past March, then you will have seen a lovely tribute in pictures to the memory and ministry of the Rev. Peggi Boyce who passed away January 19 due to complications from a heart attack at the age of 64.

Members of the Presbytery grieve her loss, as does her congregation, The First Presbyterian Church of Antrim, New Hampshire, and the surrounding communities.

“Pastor Peggi” blazed a trail by being the first female pastor ordained in her Presbytery. She served pastorates in Nevada, Utah, Wyoming as well as Antrim, NH. Funny, candid and ready to try anything, she blessed skateboarders before races and even blessed the Indy 500 racecars and drivers at the NH Motor Speedway in Loudon.

She loved strange hats and would wear them to shock and amuse townspeople at public events. A friend described her: “she was to so many of us a burst of bright energy – like a meteor flying through the night sky – amazing to watch/listen to”; and she was famously known for her benediction of “bless all those who wiggle.”

We remember Pastor Peggi fondly and we will miss her.

Sandy Carroll

by Joanna Damon/ Mid-Coast Presbyterian



Sandy Carroll is a planner but she is also impulsive and just wants everyone to have fun. When I first met Sandy I would say she was equal parts energy, enthusiasm, generosity and dedication. She has been dedicated to Presbyterian Women all of her adult life.

Sandy was born in Chicago but spent her early years in Lincoln, Illinois. At about the age of ten she moved back to Chicago where her Aunt Lil introduced her to the Presbyterian church. As a teenager Sandy became involved with youth groups both at church and at the YWCA where she helped to set up dances. It was through YMCA youth club dances that she met Tom Carroll. Sandy claims Tom is such a good dancer because she was the one who taught him how. Sandy and Tom were married at the

Lakeview Presbyterian Church in 1958. Over the years Tom's job kept them on the move. They have lived in six different states according to Tom's quick calculation. He said that the one thing all the moves had in common was that wherever they went they always joined a Presbyterian church. And in every church Sandy was active in PW, serving on the coordinating team, working in the kitchen and attending gatherings. She attended her first National Gathering while a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Reno, Nevada.

Sandy and Tom have three children, Sharon, Nancy and Jim. They all live in different states. When Tom retired Sandy said that they had to move so they could be close to one of the kids. Nancy had attended the Maine School of Art in Portland and stayed in Maine. So, they moved to Maine in 1998 and rented a place to live while their house was being built. I told you that Sandy was a planner. She saw the floor plan for her dream house in a newspaper during the 1980s. She carefully saved it away until the move to Maine in 1998 when it finally became a reality. The house quickly became a hive of PW activity as many Christmas teas and other social events took place there.

Sandy and Tom joined Mid-Coast Presbyterian in Topsham where both of them became active and took on jobs to serve the church community. Sandy was on the Coordinating Team for PW and took a leadership role in many of the activities. When Alyce Woodall became Moderator of the PW of PNNE, Sandy, along with Elaine Brown, became a liaison for the State of Maine. She was always an enthusiastic supporter of gatherings at all levels and urged all the women of the church to participate. At the 2000 National Gathering some women from Mid-Coast were trying

to find Sandy among the thousands of women gathered there and they finally found her because they heard her laughing.

In 2008 while walking into church for the Christmas Eve service Sandy fell on black ice in the parking lot. She suffered a severe concussion and was in the hospital and rehab centers for months. As she slowly worked her way toward recovery she fell again and once again suffered a concussion. These injuries have left Sandy with some difficulties with her balance and her memory. But you can still see her sitting with Tom in the congregation on Sundays and you can still locate her by her laughter.

Ellen A. Blackwell

1922 - 2010



Ellen A. (Doole) Blackwell, age 87, a Dracut resident for 55 years, passed away unexpectedly on Sunday, June 6, 2010 at home. For more than 60 years she was the beloved wife of James D. Blackwell, Jr., who passed away on December 11, 2006. Born in Lowell on June 7, 1922, Ellen was the daughter of the late George L. and Helen (Shanks) Doole.

Mrs. Blackwell attended Lowell Schools and graduated from Lowell High School in 1939. She subsequently began her career as a private secretary at the Waterhead Mills in Lowell. She held several part and full-time positions as a secretary or bookkeeper, including a position in the Dracut Selectman's Office. Mrs. Blackwell was employed as the executive secretary for the former Dracut Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Christos Daoulas, from 1961-1970.

An active member of the Eliot Presbyterian Church of Lowell, Ellen was an Elder, Deacon, Clerk of Session, Sunday School Teacher, Junior Choir Mother, and Moderator of the Women's Association. She served as a member or chair of many committees at the church over a period of more than 50 years. In addition, she was involved with feeding the homeless of Lowell through St. Paul's Kitchen at the Eliot Presbyterian Church.

Ellen also served as Moderator of the Northern New England Presbytery and held a variety of other leadership positions in that organization. She participated in many committees of the Synod of the Northeast, held offices for the national United Presbyterian Women, and was a delegate to the national General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA). A highlight of her church activities was her 1974 trip to India and Nepal as representative of the National Organization of Presbyterian Women's Global Awareness Mission. She was involved with, and served as an officer of, numerous ecumenical groups including local and state Church Women United, the Massachusetts Council of Churches, and the Massachusetts Christian Unity Council, of which she was secretary for 9 years.

Mrs. Blackwell volunteered at Saints Memorial Medical Center (formerly St. Joseph's Hospital) for 36 years. She served as president of the Saints Memorial Women's Auxiliary and was named Volunteer of the Year in 2001. She served as for twelve years as a Library Trustee at the Moses Greeley Parker Library in Dracut, often as chairperson. Other volunteer and service activities

included the Dracut Historical Society and the YWCA of Greater Lowell, for which she was Chair of the Board of Directors.

According to her family, she was an avid tennis player and loved reading. Ellen enjoyed her travels with family and friends to Europe, the Middle East, Bermuda and Venezuela.

She is survived by one daughter, Elmina J. Hilsenrath and her husband Ernest of Laurel, MD; one son, George L. Blackwell of Dracut; one grandson, James D. Blackwell of Vail, CO; three step-grandchildren; four step-great grandchildren; one sister, Mary (Doole) (Amiot) Bennett and her husband Ralph of Tewksbury; also many nieces and nephews, Mrs. Blackwell was the sister of the late Anna G. Mansfield, George S., John A. and Josiah S. Doole.

Hazel Nilson

A Centenarian With True Presbyterian Endurance, Faith and Positive Outlook

**By Barbara Holland Cooper
Kearsarge Community Church**



A talk with Hazel Nilson is an experience in what is best about living a long and productive life. What a happy occurrence when Hazel made the decision to move to New Hampshire from her home in Wisconsin and become part of the KCPC family. She tells us that everybody needs two things in life - family and friends. For Hazel these are important elements in a happy life. Hazel has been blessed with both, and she continues to make friends and share her life and good spirits with friends in church and with folks of all ages. Lucky for us it was Hazel's family, son and daughter-in-law Bob and Nancy Nilson who introduced her to KCPC.

When asked whether she grew up as a Presbyterian Hazel replied oh no, my family was Lutheran. I didn't join the Presbyterian church until I started visiting Florida every year with a dear friend. Her first

Presbyterian church was the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where she was a member for more than 70 years. To which I said wow that's a lifetime to some, and she said "Well, you have to remember I am 108 years old", and that's a long time and a lot can happen. So, by any measure Hazel has been a Presbyterian for a long time, a lifetime for many.

Hazel is a faithful participant in KCPC's Monday evening PW pot lucks and she has her regular seat near the choir on every Sunday morning. She is an inspiration and a role model who always makes time to share her experiences with others in the church both young and old.

Hazel does indeed come from hardy stock. She tells the story, which was passed down to her from her mother, about the events on the day she was born. Her mother and father owned a bakery in the town in which she grew up. As a bakery they started work early in the morning, open for business at 5am, and by 8am the store was empty of the best rolls and breads. On this particular morning, Hazel's mother was upstairs serving customers and her father was downstairs tending the ovens. Hazel was due to be born at any time and her mother was prepared - she had her suitcase all packed. In the midst of serving the customers Hazel's mother yelled down to her father, you better come up here now to tend to these customers, because I've got to go to the hospital right now. So, he came upstairs whereupon Hazel's mother picked up her suitcase, left the bakery and walked 2 blocks to get to the street car which took her to the hospital. Hazel was born two hours later in the hospital.

Her lifelong mantra and advice to all the younger Presbyterian women is "do what you say you will do". Commitment and integrity are critical hallmarks for a successful life, a successful organization or church, and indeed a successful community. "If you say you are going to do something, it is really important to follow through." Don't promise something that you are not going to do. You have to follow through with what you promise, even with children whether it's a reward or a punishment. That's how she has lived her life, that's how her parents treated her, and that's how she raised her two sons. It brought her many successes in Sunday school, in church, in college, in her career as a physical education teacher and now in her role as famous and revered elder.

Hazel continues to be a blessing to KCPC with her positive outlook, her sense of humor, and her strong physical, moral, and friendly presence every Sunday. Bravo!

Thelma Waite

By Joanna Damon
Mid-Coast Presbyterian

Thelma Waite has done it all – well at least, like many of the women who have had leadership roles in PNNE Presbyterian Women (PW), she has done a great deal for PW, for her church and for her community. I knew she was very active in the Leeds Church but in going through the old



records of PNNE PW I learned she had also been very active at the Presbytery level as well. She was particularly active in the 1960s and 70s when she served as Secretary pro tem and as Vice President (this position was later know as enabler and is now know as liaison) for Maine. Marci Clark and I met with Thelma to learn more about her and her involvement with the church. We had a wonderful time talking with her and this is what we learned.

Thelma was raised in Center Turner, Maine. She was brought up in the Universalist Church because her mother believed that you should attend a church in your own town. She was active in the youth group which provided many activities such as bird walks and woodworking projects. She married a local man and became Mrs. Clayton Enos. Clayton was killed in a hunting accident leaving her with three children and another on the way. Thelma told us that Carl Geores, pastor of the MATE churches was the first one to call on her to offer comfort. She moved to Leeds shortly after that.

She married her second husband, Clinton Waite, in 1957. He was in the service at the time and she and the children joined him in Germany where they lived for two years. Following his discharge they moved back to Leeds. She said that her in-laws were very active in the church there and in fact they were instrumental in bringing Carl Geores to Maine. When her father-in-law's mother died he could not find a minister to bury her so it became his mission to find a minister for the area. Thelma very much wanted to join the church at Leeds but she had not been baptised. The Universalist Church christened people but did not baptise them. So she knelt before Rev. Geores to finally be baptised but she was so pregnant at the time that he had to help her get back up. She has been active in the Leeds church ever since.

Thelma told Marci and I about things the women in the church used to do. Like women in all our churches they had many projects that helped the church financially and served the women spiritually. They came together for Bible Studies, they held suppers, they catered for birthdays, and weddings and they made quilts, crazy quilts. They cut out squares and then the women

would take them home to sew. Thelma talked about getting up at 5:00 in the morning before anyone else was up to sew her squares.

A few other things Thelma has done over the years includes: serving as Clerk of Session, and on the Polity Committee, as moderator for PW at Leeds, driving for RCAM, which she still does to this day at 85 years of age, distributing goods for Church World Services, attending the General Assembly in Wichita, Kansas, and running the clothing center. She is on the Board of the Western Maine Transportation and head of Civil Defense for the Town. Oh yes, she also raised seven children.