MILDRED RINGWALT
A Legacy to Carolina Friends School

MILDRED RINGWALT

- longtime member of the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting
- one of seven members of the Chapel Hill & Durham Friends Meetings who founded CFS
- first clerk of the Board of Trustees at CFS
- son Chris & Chris' wife Sharon are past CFS Board members
- three grandsons attended CFS, including lifer Stuart who graduated in 1998
- in 2007 her family helped endow the Mildred and Arthur Ringwalt Fund to supplement the budgeted amount for staff salaries

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I consider Mildred Ringwalt a saint. If you were around Chapel Hill in the late 1960s and early '70s you probably saw her. Every week, people opposed to the Vietnam War would gather in front of the post office for the Wednesday Vigil. On sunny days it was an easy place to drink, chat, and show where you stood. To most of us, talking to the few passerby didn't seem like important work.

But it was to Mildred. She believed personal actions made a big difference. To her, changing one person's mind about an issue made it worth the effort.

Many people went to the vigil once or twice. Mildred was always there, rain or cold, for more than six years, till the war was over. She had staying power.

Mildred spent her life helping people. She thought everyone was wonderful. Long before there was a homeless shelter in Chapel Hill, before there was any organized way to provide food for the hungry, Mildred was providing emergency help to the homeless. She would find them a home, or take them into her own.

And she had an uncanny knack for getting others to help. People who would not have given the homeless a second thought would find themselves

preparing meals or even taking someone in. After years of dong this work on her own, she helped organize the Inter-Church (now Inter-Faith) Council, which has served thousands in need.

Mildred was generous. When the Chapel Hill Friends (Quaker) Meeting was trying to build a meetinghouse, she sold most of her valuable Oriental art to finance it. As the meetinghouse neared completion, lack of funds threatened the project. Mildred anonymously donated the money to finish it.

She was committed to racial justice. After fighting to integrate the public schools, Mildred and others founded the Carolina Friends School, the first fully integrated school in North Carolina. It was her dream to create a model for the public system to follow.

I believe we all have met saints. Not icons of perfection or fame, but of simple humanness and care.

Rosco Reeve (Mildred's son-in-law)
Lenten Transformation Story, 1 April 2009
United Church Gazette,
www.unitedchurch.org/gazette

Her commitment and vision had a powerful impact on those who knew her. People had faith in her. Once, a member of Friends Meeting approached another member and said she had been praying about homosexuality and concluded that it was wrong. "Well," answered the other, "Mildred and I have been praying about this issue as well, and we have reached the opposite conclusion. You may not believe my prayers, but surely you believe Mildred's."

Mildred Ringwalt, 86, died Monday, January 3 at her home in Chapel Hill. She left a legacy of institutions that work, innumerable acts of grace, countless lives transformed. Many will remember her as the person who got them involved in issues they didn't know they cared about, until she showed them they should.

I'll always remember her at the Wednesday Vigil, standing in the cold, waiting to talk. She's still talking to me.

Greg Swanson
"Staying Power"
The Independent Weekly
after Mildred's 1994 passing