

ter that an imperiled world still desperately needs,” friend Jack Dresser, a retired psychoanalyst, wrote to her in the final days. “I have seen none in Eugene who surpass you in honesty of purpose, unimpeachable integrity, social courage and readiness to face what others shrink from.”

The long letter goes on to say, “I invite you to cancel your exit plan and instead broaden that circle to friends you will never meet or know, each representing another potential circle of spreading influence.” Similar pleas were voiced at the Friends Meeting Dec. 6.

A Political Life

Peg Morton’s strong political leanings were informed by her study of U.S. foreign policy, her connections with activist groups and churches of different denominations, and her travels and peace work in the U.S. and around the world, particularly with the Latin America Solidarity Committee and Witness for Peace. She was a member of numerous peace delegations to Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua and elsewhere. She was tear-gassed at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle and arrested for participating in protests. She spent three months in federal prison for repeated civic disobedience at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia, a U.S. military training center whose graduates went on to become many of Latin America’s most brutal dictators and oppressors. In response to protests, the SOA was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, but is still known to many as the “School of Assassins.” SOA Watch continues its campaign to shut the institute down and replace it with a school dedicated to civil and human rights.

“I feel a real, deep need to be out there in some way working for peace and justice,” Morton said in her interview with *EW*. She admired the courageous “radical” priests in Third World countries who practiced liberation theology — missionary work that focused not so much on saving souls as raising people out of poverty, disease and oppression.

Morton’s politics even carried over to the Friends Meeting for worship, where Quakers sit in silent meditation and only speak if inspired to do so. After a long silence, she did speak out at her final Friends Meeting.

“I love my Friends Meeting and many of you are here. You are my family, my faith, my spiritual family and you have given me so much support over the years,” she told the group of about 150. “For me, and I am weeping now, and I have done weird things and the meeting has supported me [laughter]. But what I need to say is sometimes we Quakers, and other people too, push controversy under the rug because we want to get along with each other, we want things to be smooth and peaceful and beautiful, and so there can be controversies there that are not addressed.” She went on to talk about injustices in the Israel-Palestine conflict “and our inability in our Friends Meeting and in our community to face it.”

She will no longer be a presence, carrying the planet flag, at the Monday Women in Black silent peace vigils downtown, at the Tuesday morning Buddhist walking meditations at the old Federal Building or at Wednesday vigils with Betsy Steffensen and Charlie Hirsch in protest

Remembering Peg

From various sources, including CaringBridge.org.

“Peg Morton is one of the bravest people I have ever known. She doesn’t set out to be heroic. Peg just goes where her heart, her values and her social/political awareness lead her.” — *Marion Malcolm*

“In our world filled with violence, suffering and discrimination, many of us are seeking hope and looking for people who give us hope. This is where Peg Morton comes in. She is a true peacemaker, a committed activist who gives us hope.” — *Roy Bourgeois*

“Peg Morton remains forever in my mind and in my heart and in my work for peace and justice. ... I for one will continue to look to the shining example of a dear, sweet woman who touched my life so closely and so passionately.” — *Scott Miksch*

“She was an activist extraordinaire. She devoted her life to many causes but I know Peg through working together on the Hiroshima Day commemoration, as part of Taxes for Peace Not War and by supporting her Latin American solidarity work. Peg was a driven activist but she also knew how to have fun. She loved to sing and she loved to party. We spent time camping together at Scott Lake and drinking beer at Sam Bond’s. I loved watching her perform with the Raging Grannies.” — *Michael Carrigan*

“Peg walked her talk like no one I have ever known. She lived simply and without extravagance. She gave freely of her time, her ideas and her energy. She was quick to burst into song and her radiant smile beamed right through you.” — *Karen Olch*

“I will never, ever forget Peg, her incredible spirit, drive and love for peace, for which she struggled relentlessly and bravely during the course of her life. Bless her for all she gave in life, for now she is receiving her own eternal peace in return.” — *Ken Neubeck*

“Her last words to me were, ‘Laughing, laughing, we must keep laughing, with each other and at ourselves, if we are to overcome what lies ahead with love and humility.’ I am honored to be your daughter through thick and thin, grateful, grateful for your love, forgiving of your trespasses and renewed by your teachings. I am humble now before all the bridges you have walked. I pray that God will keep you close as you walk this last bridge. Happily, peacefully you walk.” — *Anna Sommers*



of the Iraq War. The Raging Grannies will sing on without her strong voice.

An Optimist to the End

Violence, injustice, environmental destruction and apathy globally and right here in Eugene continued to perplex Morton right up to the end, and she was busy writing letters to fellow activists urging action in support of Palestinians. She wrote to newspaper editors about homelessness and other issues. Friends passed on letters to *EW* and *The Register-Guard* both before and after she died. The letters offer a degree of hope for peace, and at the Friends Meeting she voiced optimism for the future of humanity.

“Sometimes it feels as though it’s sweeping over us and

it’s hard to get out of the mud of our feelings, but there is a growing spirit, a growing energy, and it’s not just here among activists, it’s around the world,” she told the packed worship meeting. “It’s the Afghan youth volunteers, it’s the people who are rising nonviolently to make changes in Iraq and across Africa. There is a movement; you can feel it. It’s a spirit network and it’s there, and who knows what it will bring. It would be very much a surprise if this suddenly took over the world, but it’s there, and I feel it’s like a baby being born.” ■

A celebration of life for Peg Morton will be from 2 to 4 pm Saturday, Jan. 16, at the First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive Street. Her book, Feeling Light Within, I Walk: Tales, Adventures and Reflections of a Quaker Activist, is available at local bookstores.



PEG MORTON LEADS THE RAGING GRANNIES IN SONG IN 2014 AT A WAR NO MORE EVENT

PHOTO BY TED TAYLOR