

Testimony to the Grace of God in the life of Andrée Hastings 1924 – 2014

Andrée was the younger daughter of Jean and Lucile Inebnit, emigrants from Switzerland. Her father, formerly an officer in the Swiss army, left Lausanne in 1920 where he was persecuted for his pacifist views. Andrée and her sister Colette grew up in Leeds; they were bilingual with dual nationality. The family always retained their Swiss nationality and kept close links with their original village and their grand- parents at Chateau d'Oex. They spent many happy holidays there. As a child Andrée was artistic and showed a talent for drawing. Her picture of her grandfather still hangs in the chalet today.

The Inebnit family's first house was in Lyddon Terrace near the University, where Jean was a lecturer in the French department. Colette and Andrée attended Leeds Girls High School. By the time of WW2 the family had moved out to The Drive at Adel and attended the Quaker Meeting on New Adel Lane, established in 1939. Andrée must have attended or helped with the Sunday School which was held at their home. For many years they met in a railway carriage in the garden and Andrée delighted in the family of foxes who had their den beneath it. Edward Starkie of Adel Meeting remembers the railway wagon Sunday- school very well, and how Colette and Andrée's presence, and their parents' welcoming home was very attractive to the numerous children who lived in the neighbourhood at that time. The carriage was still there many years later when the new owners moved in with their children!

Andrée studied at Leeds University during the war, gaining a degree in French and Philosophy. After the war she followed her father's example as a peace maker. Jean Inebnit helped Pierre Ceresole to set up "Service Civil International" and promoted peace all his life. When he went to France to work for Friends Relief Service, Andrée went too and worked for Quakers in Paris from March 1945 to July 1946. One French woman she supported had fallen in love with a German soldier during the war and was persecuted by her fellow citizens when the war ended. Andrée gave this lady a lot of support and maintained a friendship with her throughout her life.

Afterwards Andrée lectured in French at the Royal Holloway College, part of the University of London. This was a happy time in her life. She continued painting, and her picture of a wild part of the college grounds is still enjoyed by her son today. She met Anthony Hastings who was a brilliant scholar at Cambridge. She recalled a beautiful summer day when Tony took her boating on the river. They must have been a handsome couple. They were married at Brentford and Isleworth Meeting

House and later established a home in Leamington Spa. They had two boys, Laurie and Luke. Andrée continued to take an active part in Quaker life and represented Warwickshire Monthly Meeting on Meeting for Sufferings from 1979 – 1985.

Sadly Andrée was widowed when her children were still very young. Several years later her elder son, Laurie, died in a drowning accident while he was on an outdoor adventure holiday in Switzerland. Despite these sorrows Andrée was a joyful person, open and loving to everyone. She maintained a sense of proportion, accepting things as they were, and had a great sense of humour. Luke recalls her courage and lack of self-consciousness dealing with strangers that sometimes embarrassed him! She once approached some hell's angels daubed in swastikas and asked them why they were wearing these symbols and spoke to them about the horrors of the camps and the people she knew who had survived the holocaust, leaving countless loved ones behind. As a more elderly lady, where possible she wouldn't just drop a coin in the cap of someone begging but would invite them for a cup of tea and a bite and listen to their story.

Andrée returned to the family home in Leeds when Colette and her husband Badi Lenz moved to the old family house in Switzerland. Thus Adel Meeting was enriched by Andrée's presence. She radiated warmth and love and spoke of 'this precious meeting'. In her frequent ministry she often seemed transported and filled with the spirit. The children loved to sit and talk with her after Meeting. For many years she was our representative to 'Leeds 16 Churches Together'.

Luke married Silke, a German student whom he met at university. When they graduated they worked in Leeds for a while, then Luke took a job in Switzerland where they still live with their three daughters. Andrée visited them regularly while she was able. When she could no longer travel she enjoyed their visits to Leeds and was delighted when they eventually took over the family chalet at Chateau d'Oex.

When Andrée's mother-in-law Cherie grew old, she came to live in Leeds, and had a bungalow built for herself in the garden of the old Inebnit family house, where the vegetable plot and compost heap used to be. When Cherie died, Andrée moved into that lovely little bungalow, which became her last home, and the family house was sold. Her garden and garden room were a miniature Nature Reserve, abundant and flowering like her personality.

Following a serious car accident in Canada, Andrée became frail and less steady. She was still delighted to come to meeting when she had a lift and for many years also attended the fortnightly Meeting for Worship at Bedford Court, the Quaker retirement home at Horsforth, Leeds. She had several falls, one of which resulted in

a broken femur and a long hospital stay. (The nurses loved her cheerful and outgoing nature.) After that she was never able to walk again. She was housebound for many years and dependent on carers for the rest of her life.

Despite having no family left in Leeds Andrée never lost her interest in other people. She enjoyed visits from folk whatever their age, background or circumstances, invariably leaving the visitor feeling better for their visit. Latterly Adel Friends shared many uplifting Meetings for Worship in Andrée's sitting room where she often regaled them with tales of living adventurously in her youth. While Andrée claimed to never give gifts, she gave the gift of herself unstintingly and could be quietly very generous if she saw a worthy cause.

When confined to home she kept in touch by phone with Luke and his family, and Colette who was still living in Switzerland. When Colette died in January 2011 Andrée felt the loss deeply; they had been devoted as sisters despite being so different in character and temperament.

We were very privileged to have known her and been loved by her. She touched everyone's hearts. When she died in August 2014 a precious light went out, but our wonderful memories remain. She truly lived up to her Quaker faith:

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.

George Fox, 1656

Pat Gerwat & Helen Leach, with contributions from Eve Allibone-Dredge and Christine Francis. Our grateful thanks to Luke Hastings, Friends House Library and Adel (Leeds) Prayer Group.

October 20th 2016