Obituary for Helen Elizabeth Hughes, Ph.D.

Helen was born April 23rd, 1922 in Damariscotta, ME at the parsonage, the last of ten children, to Rev. Thomas Bennett Hughes (1865-1957) and the Rev. Sara Barbara Mayhew Hughes (1876-1972). She died in Belfast, ME May 26th, 2015. She was 93.


Helen was educated by the public schools in Maine, Connecticut and Florida; secondary education at Northfield School, MA; she attended Butler University (1940-1942), received her B.A and M.S. from California State Universities; Ph.D. at the University of Chicago (1970).

She was a school teacher, a school psychologist, a university professor at Governor State University, and founding editor of the periodical “The Creative Woman” (1977-1992). The university made all twelve volumes of the Creative Woman available on line at http://libguides.govst.edu/TheCreativeWoman. She was active in university affairs including the faculty union where she served as president for three years. She maintained an independent practice in neuropsychology using the Halstead Battery of neuropsychological tests, and served as an expert witness in court cases.

Dr. Hughes was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Churches for sixty years, serving in leadership positions such as the chairman of the board of trustees, and chair of the Women and Religion Committee of the Central Mid-west district of the U.U.A. She helped to form a church-affiliated group on women’s spirituality that met every full moon from 1961 to the present time. She gave many public lectures including sermons at various UU Churches. She was active in social justice movements including the Civil Rights, the Peace Movement, Women’s Equality, and the Environment. She loved music, art, outdoor activities such as sailing, biking, hiking and camping. She explored a wide range of social, political and economic issues.

Helen is survived by one sister: Victoria Lena Reiss, Shady, NY, and son Jonathan M. Purinton, Warren, ME., four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

The Memorial Service will be held on Sunday, August 23rd at 1:30, and will be officiated by the Reverend Deane Perkins, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast, ME. Donations in her memory may be made to The Maine Peoples Alliance at https://www.mainepeoplesalliance.org/civicrm/contribute/transact?reset=1&id=2 or the Belfast Transition Town Initiative http://www.belfasttransition.org/.