

## **BLANCHE WHEELER DAVISON**

WATERVILLE -- Blanche Wheeler Davison, 80, conservation activist and Unitarian Universalist, died as she wished, peacefully in her sleep, at 5 a.m. Saturday, May 12, 2012, as the sun shone into her room, after spending months of "living the long goodbye" to face terminal cancer.

Blanche was born June 15, 1931, in Damariscotta, graduated from Lincoln Academy and moved to New York state, where she married her beloved husband Arthur Davison in 1950 to raise a family. Her interests were sewing, gardening, downhill skiing and swimming. Her spiritual questions led her to find common cause with the Unitarian faith and began her lifelong membership with Unitarian Universalists, National Public Radio and many environmental groups.

She served many terms as president in a lay-led Unitarian Universalist Society during her years in New York in the 1970s. She was a founder of the Midcoast Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Edgecomb after retiring to Maine in the 1980s. She was a member of the Waterville Universalist Unitarian Church when she died (after moving to Waterville to live with her daughter, Gale Davison, and her son-in-law, Donald Smallidge, in 2007). She was an active participant in UU discussion groups and the Northeast District Women's Retreats. Her faith was rooted in caring for the Earth, which she practiced daily through energy conservation and enjoyment of outdoor decks with their easy access to birdsong, Earth scents and fresh air. She enjoyed gardening with an emphasis on wild landscaping and eating organic and locally grown foods. Blanche's deep passion was her desire to recycle all forms of packaging, including designs that endanger wildlife, that introduce harmful chemicals into water systems or that create excessive packaging materials for disposal. She created and managed one of the most comprehensive recycling programs in the state of New York with her friend and colleague Muriel Cornish during the 1970s. Her efforts started with curbside newspaper pickup and evolved into co-directing the Carmel, N.Y., Department of Environmental Conservation. She earned an award in 1978 from the town of Carmel, N.Y., for her conservation efforts. She resumed her interest in recycling when she moved to Waterville in 2007 and joined the Sustain Mid Maine Coalition. She had actively participated in their Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Team. She went to multiple educational events to promote her team's work. She donated funds to Sustain Mid Maine to provide reusable shopping bags, which help promote keeping plastic bags out of the environment.

She was most proud of her award-winning, energy-efficient, passive-solar house, which she built and designed in Nobleboro with her husband in 1984. Other activities she had engaged in were the Damariscotta Lake Association, New Hope for Women, the Maine Green Party, Beyond War, CONA, and a co-housing community in Edgecomb. Blanche was diagnosed with cancer in late 2011. Her treatments were successful in stabilizing the progression of her blood cancer until pneumonitis required the need for life support in April 2012. She was valiant and gracious throughout her six-month struggle with terminal cancer.

Her caring leadership style created countless friends and admirers who loved her deeply for the contributions she made in many organizations and activities she participated in during her lifetime. She was cherished for her wise, strong, yet gentle approach and will continue to inspire others to engage in speaking out for change.

People wishing to make donations in her honor can send these to Sustain Mid Maine Coalition, c/o Linda Woods, 1 Common St., Waterville, ME 04901; or through [www.waterville-me.gov/departments/mmsc](http://www.waterville-me.gov/departments/mmsc). There will be a "donate now" button and instructions to use PayPal on the website.

Blanche is predeceased by her husband, Arthur Gale Davison; her younger sisters, Susan Singleton of Newport, Pa., and Katie Willett of Bath; and her parents, Evelyn and Richard Wheeler. She is survived by her children, Gale Davison, living in Waterville, Dale Broszeit, living in Hamilton, Mont., and Todd Davison living in Olympia, Wash.; by her five grandchildren, Aren Givens, Erica Richer and Heather Keller, living in Washington state, and Ryan Keller and Trevor Keller living in New York state; by her siblings Robert Wheeler, living in Nobleboro, her sister Adele Roberts, living in Benson, Ariz., and her sister Hazel Loheed, living in Fort Pierce, Fla.

The memorial service to celebrate her life and accomplishments will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 9, at the Universalist Unitarian church at 69 Silver St., Waterville. Please bring your memories to share.

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