

Ellen Cary Bell

LITTLETON — Ellen Cary Bell, 78, died at her home in Littleton on Monday, May 23, 2005, in the care of the Nashoba Nursing Service and Hospice. She was the wife of the late Edgar D. Bell Jr.

She was born in Baltimore, Md., and as a young girl she lived in Berlin, Germany, where her father administered a hunger relief program for the American Friends Service Committee. She later graduated from George School in New Hope, Pa. After completing her degree in chemistry at Bryn Mawr College, she enrolled at Harvard Medical School in 1947, with the school's third class accepting women. She was one of the first two dozen women to enter the medical school, graduating in 1951. She also met her husband, Edgar, another medical student at Harvard.

As Mrs. Bell was a lifelong Quaker, she and her husband were married at the Cambridge Friends Meeting in 1949. She was an active member of Acton Friends Meeting until her death.

In 1955, she moved with her family to Littleton, near the Acton Medical Associates where her husband was a founding partner. Over the decades they were renowned for their oversized vegetable garden, raspberries, extensive orchard and their flock of chickens. Fresh asparagus and eggs, apple butter, sauerkraut and sour cherry jam were some of the garden delights they shared with many neighbors and friends.

During her extended tenure on the Board of Health, she oversaw the local public health debates in a firm but gentle manner. She was a charter member of Littleton's recycling committee which implemented the recycling program at the town's transfer station. Mrs. Bell was also instrumental in the development and operation of Nashoba Nursing Service and Hospice in Harvard. She served on numerous boards including those responsible for the Massachusetts Welfare Social Service Department, regional mental health agencies and the Council on Children. In addition to her professional interests she was enthusiastic about ornithology and botany, Vermont history, and live classical music.

A pediatrician, she was a longtime advocate of local and regional public health concerns. For many years her family gave out apples instead of candy on Halloween night to local children. During the energy crisis of the 1970s, she argued successfully with the

town officials that it would be unsafe to darken the street light in front of her house because of the nearby dangerous intersection. Starting in the 1960s, she was the school physician in Littleton for nearly a decade. Later she served on the Littleton Board of Health for 27 years until her retirement in 2001.

She is survived by five children, Thomas Bell of Lake Oswego, Ore., James Bell of Berlin, Germany, Samuel Bell of Littleton, Sarah and Richard Bell, both of Cambridge; 10 grandchildren; and a brother, John Cary of Haverford, Pa.

A memorial service, under the care of the Acton Friends Meeting will be held at 2 p.m., Tuesday, June 14, at Fruitlands Museum, 102 Prospect Hill Road, Harvard, Mass. Burial will be private.