

Sharing Thoughts on the Life of Elise Boulding- March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010 Into Full Flower Event

The Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning and Dialogue

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My deepest thanks to the Ikeda Center for inviting me to this auspicious event honoring these two great peace pioneers. And thanks to those of you who are here in the audience because either you know Elise Boulding and Daisaku Ikeda and are here to honor them, or are here to learn more about them. I look forward especially to the sharing that will follow our remarks.

Elise Boulding has been called the “matriarch” of the twentieth century peace research movement. Sociologist emeritus from Dartmouth College and the University of Colorado, she has been in on the ground floor in the movements of peace, women’s studies and futures and has played pivotal roles in each. Prior to her scholarly career, formally beginning at age fifty, however, she was making major contributions in other areas, most notably as a peace educator and an activist, a leader in the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and as a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Boulding has been the recipient of over nineteen awards for her work in peace and was a 1990 nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. Boulding’s theoretical work on the role of the family in educating toward social change, and the role women have played in peacemaking, predate the later work discussing women’s unique capacities for connections, networking and peace. The various stages of her life: child, student, young wife, Quaker, activist, sociologist and scholar, retiree and elder have been bound together, metaphorically as a hologram. Always eschewing dichotomy, her life has been a constant attempt to integrate, both privately and in her public life, the human needs for both autonomy and connectedness. Elise Boulding’s ideas on transnational networks and their relationship to global understanding are considered seminal contributions to twentieth century peace education thought. According to Elise, all of her future work as a sociologist and academic was grounded in her experience as parent and homemaker and teacher of Quaker Sunday School. As she has said “listening to my and other kids was my learning”.

What surprised me when I first approached Elise, to ask her permission to weave her life and work into an intellectual biography for my doctoral dissertation, was, first, that no one else had written her biography, and second, how gracious and delighted she was that we could undertake this collaborative journey. I can truly say that I had no idea at that time, in 1996, just how transformed I would be, and how much Elise would subsequently influence my life and work. Our friendship as it has developed over these past 14 years has meant a great deal. Elise is imminently approachable. Upon our

first meeting at her home, she greeted me warmly and we began to talk over a pot of delicious home-made lentil soup. At that time, Elise was living in a newly created apartment in the back of her daughter Christy's home in suburban Boston. She had intentionally downsized from her home in Boulder, having recently relocated from Colorado. She was cooking the soup over a hot plate and I saw how simply, yet how elegantly she was living in her cozy surroundings. I was deeply honored that Elise opened, literally, her life to me, allowing me access to her decades of personal journals, letters and files. A biographer rarely has the privilege of working with a living subject, particularly one so accessible.

We started off with the idea that she would share with me her life "epiphanies", those events which marked passages or transformative experiences in her life. These provided guidelines for subsequent discussions and research. Not surprisingly, the meeting of certain people in her life marked many of these life experiences as especially important and the two most important influences Elise felt in her life were her mother and Kenneth, her life partner of over 50 years. Other influential colleagues have been sociologist Alva Myrdahl, Quaker civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, long-time Quaker Directors of Pendle Hill conference center Anna and Howard Brinton, Lew Hoskins of the American Friends Service Committee, futurists Fred Polak and Eleanora Masini, Johan Galtung and anthropologist Margaret Mead. As her life progressed into academia and she became increasingly sought after and busy, with a tendency to overdo, she credits various brothers and sisters of Catholic religious orders as helping ground her and return her to contemplation.

I think that Mary Catherine Bateson, who wrote the forward for the biography, captures so well in her writing the kind of person Elise is. "Elise Boulding had a dislike of dichotomies, between public and private life and between research and activism. She enlarged upon that with an insistence on spirituality, not as an occasional or marginal aspect of life but central to the process of becoming fully human. In the areas of research, education and action that are so often kept separate, we see a cross-cutting pattern of ongoing listening, a spiritually grounded willingness to learn that is often formalized as research, a movement toward relationship that includes both teaching and learning and a commitment to change, individual, social and global. Elise's spirituality stretches from an emphasis on listening-both to the inner voice and to others-to a spiritual imagination with the capacity to envision and pursue the possibility of genuine globalization, which would lead to mutually respectful interdependence and, above all, to peace".

Elise's status as an immigrant profoundly affected her life view and subsequent work. She was 3 when the family left Oslo. Her mother was a driving force in her early years, relentlessly pushing her to redo her school lessons at home in Norwegian. She believes that she became a sociologist in part,

because of her ability to both stand in and stand out of both the American and Scandinavian cultures. One of Elise's major epiphanies was the invasion of Norway by the Nazis on the eve of WWII. Elise, partly through her mother, had always held Norway as a safe place to return, should America or, for that matter, the rest of the world, turn out to be unsafe. Elise's ideas on utopias have, at their heart, her early belief that Norway was a utopia. Once the invasion happened, she said to herself "if there are no safe places, then it is up to me to create them". Thus began her life long work in peace, first as an activist and volunteer, with the American Friends Service Committee , the Womens' International League for Peace and Freedom, in which she rose up to become International Chair in 1967, heavy involvement in her Quaker meeting and in the wider Quaker world, including speaking and writing.

During the Vietnam War, Elise and Kenneth were part of a delegation, through their Ann Arbor Quaker Meeting and with the American Friends Service Committee, transporting funds to Canada for war victims in Vietnam, without regard to whether those funds would go to North or South Vietnam. This was illegal at the time. This was one of the few times where Elise took the risk of possible arrest for her actions, though she has been a peace vigiler for many years, mostly recently on the green in Needham. Soon thereafter, still during the Vietnam War, she was persuaded to run for a Congressional seat in Michigan on a peace platform.

Elise began her more traditional academic career with a return to school to obtain a Ph.D. when she was 45. She completed her doctorate with a dissertation on the study of global womens' roles, which later set the stage for her seminal work on women: *The Underside of History, a View of Women Through Time*. Her high energy has been rather astounding to some of us who have attempted to trail her. As one former student I interviewed told me.... "Elise takes big steps, both physically and metaphorically". And she has been able to get a great deal done. She has had very high expectations for herself and those with whom she has worked. During the time she was a doctoral student, she was appointed International Chair of WILPF, helped to start the International Peace Research Association (later she became international secretary-general) and was a co-founder the Consortium on Peace, Research, Education and Development, ran for Congress, did a family move to Colorado where she began teaching in sociology and women's studies and helped to found peace studies at the University of Colorado. Later she took key leadership positions in the American and International Sociological Associations, worked on climate change, population, and arms control with the American Association of the Advancement of Science, was engaged with the American Futures Society, the World Policy Institute, the United Nations University in Tokyo, consultative work with UNESCO, and was appointed by

President Jimmy Carter as the only woman to sit on the Commission to establish the US Institute of Peace. And the list of her involvements could go on.

Yet even when she was involved with high level policy making bodies and traveling around the world, Elise's heart stayed in the family and locally, held close to her. When she returned to Boulder after retiring from Dartmouth, she became chair of the Boulder Parenting Center. A family friend once noted that Elise could one minute be talking with high level UN officials and in the next, stoop to tie a child's shoes. Not only did Elise write extensively on the family, but also on children and children's capacities for peacemaking.

Elise's spiritual journey began as a young child, occasionally seeking out local churches, supported by her parents, who were nominal Lutherans. Marrying Kenneth was to immerse her quickly into Quaker spirituality. Through the years, Elise also often sought out Catholic monasteries for times of retreat. I learned that her high energy level and extended involvements would, at times, necessitate times of withdrawal. Most dramatic of these was her year's solitude in 1973 in a little hermitage she had built for her in the mountains of Colorado. It was during this time that she wrote her history of the world's women-The Underside of History.

Since we are near the end of the Decade for a Culture of Peace, I think it fitting to mention that Elise was in on the ground floor of the movement, through her consulting with UNESCO. She attended the conference launching the Year of the Culture of Peace in Cote D'Ivoire, Africa. Subsequent to this conference, Elise's work has been deeply guided by her ideas on cultures of peace. She believes that peace is all around us, that we forget that we are peaceful most of the time in our everyday lives. Education is central to building cultures of peace. Her thoughts and theories on cultures of peace culminated in the 2000 publication of her book, Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History. I think the title is descriptive of Elise's affirmation that each of us can build peace, we need to start with where we are. The Ikeda Center hosted a celebratory book signing for Elise at the publication of the book.

To me, Elise's life and work speak to a wholeness, to an integration of so much of what we need in this world and in the world to come. She was constantly attempting to make sense of her everyday world and connect this to the community and larger world, and to the future. Her sense of intentionality to make the world better has been infectious to many of us. Her life's work has been about healing the hurts both small and big, between people and with those forces which prevent reconciliation.

I have learned from her the importance of making a difference where you are. In Elise's words "we are the interface between the local and the global". I learned the importance of networking as a form of peace pedagogy and have used this model for the founding of the resource center I direct. In

Elise's words "I have probably started more networking newsletters than anything else in my life". One of her colleagues, New Zealand scholar Kevin Clements, told me that he thought that Elise's favorite and most important book, of all of her numerous books, was her address book. Interestingly, Elise never used email or the internet. When we talked about this, it became clear that, if she had, she could have quickly become overwhelmed, due to the immense number of contacts that she has.

When working as a secretary at the Center for Conflict Resolution at the University of Michigan, prior to her return to graduate school for her doctorate, it was Elise's idea to retrieve from the wastebasket letters from scholars and newsletters that the Center had received from around the world. She clipped relevant passages, pasted them into a new format, added her own comments and then sent them out as a compiled newsletter, initiating what would soon become the IPRA (International Peace Research Association) newsletter. Thus began her reputation, in those pre-computer days, as the generator of the peace research community. This newsletter pre-dated the more formal inauguration of IPRA in 1965.

I learned from her the importance of the family as laying the foundation of educating for a peaceful world. I also learned how difficult it is to play out theoretical principles in everyday family life. I love her idea of using the metaphor of family as a backdrop for the philosophical idea of global peace. This is one of my favorite phrases of hers from *One Small Plot of Heaven: Reflections from a Quaker Sociologist*, her seminal work on families—"the memories of my backyard disarmament campaign among the children of Bedford Road in the sandbox in Ann Arbor have facilitated my analyses of the SALT talks". And another phrase I like: "I have never found a better touchstone for evaluating my activities than the old question of my homemaking days 'will this help the children to grow up to be peacemakers?'" Elise firmly believes that families point the way to the future-children imagine better than adults the world we want to see. I have learned from Elise the importance of being able to visualize and step into the future world we want to create.

I have been sustained by Elise work on women and peace. This is one of my favorite quotes, from the *Underside of History, A View of Women Through Time*: "it is important that women stick out their necks when an unprecedented task presents itself". And I believe she has had the absolute understanding that women can and should do this.

And finally, a few more thoughts: I have learned the importance of learning the skills of dialogue, including deep listening. I have learned that, if we don't see the world we want, it is up to us to create it. Elise was involved in the founding of so many spaces where community and education intersect. Her idea of learning communities as building cultures of peace is seminal. I have learned the

importance of staying positive, even in the midst of what sometimes can seem despairing human and global conditions.

In 1996 Elise received the first peacemaker of the year award from the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center in Boulder, CO. The following poem was written for her by LeRoy Moore, founder and long-time director of the Center. I believe this tribute much sums up so much of what we have learned from, been inspired by and love about Elise Boulding.

For Elise Boulding, Peacemaker

Elise, how do I prize you?  
Is it for the breadth and depth of your knowledge?  
for your wonderful curiosity?  
for your love of children?  
or for your great, rolling laugh?  
or is it that you speak for women?  
or that you champion those who are despised or misunderstood?  
and what about your insistence that action without reflection is empty  
but that nothing changes without action?

When I hear your name  
so many words, thoughts, images come to mind-  
"the 200-year present you say we carry with us,  
development, whether of the child, the global civic culture,  
the economy-none really separate from the others  
simplicity  
sustainability  
"the family in the world and the world in the family"  
play-as essential for adults as for children  
--is it true that the revolution you seek  
is one where you'll be absent if you can't play?  
the trinity of thinking, feeling, acting  
your challenge that we explore cracks in the technological shield  
that separates us from the essential reality  
of our own bodies, our own souls, our earth house  
INGO—no, not Bingo—but INGO  
international non-governmental organizations,  
the abundance of which you have charted,  
some of which you have chartered, many charged.  
You remind us, Elise, in this age  
when the nation-state is simultaneously  
so destructive and so outmoded,  
so predictable, yet so predatory--  
you remind us that we already are creating  
alternatives—the voluntary associations,  
these organs of our collective passion

through which we know ourselves and achieve change,  
by means of which we already are realizing our future  
grounded in a civic culture of our own making,  
dependent on neither states nor multinational corporations.

To mention another realm of your activity,  
who can measure your contribution  
to the creation of nonviolent peace teams  
going unarmed into severe conflict,  
an idea whose time is at hand?

You have taught us to image—to imagine—  
a future better than our present,  
then to remember back to how we got there  
so in the here and now we can develop strategies  
for change that are at the same time ways of life

You are so practical a person.  
Your teaching is always about practice, action,  
and about peace—positive peace,  
the presence of justice, the elimination of injustice

And finally, Elise, I have learned with you, from you  
the spiritually rejuvenating reality of  
silence

Thank you,  
Boulder, Colorado, May 19, 1996

Thank you very much.