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Elise Boulding, Peace Scholar, Dies at 89

By **BRUCE WEBER**

Elise Boulding, a sociologist, pacifist feminist and scholar who wrote extensively about conflict resolution in both personal and global relations and who helped establish the academic field known as peace studies, died June 24 in Needham, Mass. She was 89.

The cause was liver failure, her daughter, Christine, said; her mother also had Alzheimer's disease, she said.

Ms. Boulding (pronounced BOWL-ding) taught at the [University of Colorado](#) and at Dartmouth and was the author of numerous books that explored factors inherent in building a less martial world.

A Norwegian-born Quaker, she was nominated for the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize by the [American Friends Service Committee](#), the service arm of the Quaker faith, which was a co-recipient of the Nobel in 1947.

She came late to academia and a life of letters, receiving her Ph.D. from the [University of Michigan](#) in 1969 only after rearing five children. Her experience as a mother and a homemaker, she often said, informed much of her work.

Ms. Boulding advocated for the greater inclusion of women at the highest levels of diplomacy. She argued that strong families and the early education of children in nonviolent problem-solving were significant assets in humanity's defense against a trigger-happy future.

She delineated the importance of nongovernmental organizations — from the [Girl Scouts](#) to [Unesco](#) — in creating cross-cultural communities that mitigate the belligerent effects of national rivalries. She pleaded for the greater consideration of and respect for the cultures of third world and primitive societies. She promoted environmentalism as a precept that gave individuals a stake in the perpetuation of a peaceable planet. And she pointed out time and again that though the world's attention was most often focused on humankind's penchant for conflict and violence, an equivalent, perhaps even more powerful, penchant for peaceable behavior existed in human beings as well.

“A richer and more diversified peace culture than any of us can now easily imagine, an

international global peace culture, is there to be built out of the languages and lifeways and knowledge and experience worlds of the '10,000 societies' now spread across the 185 states of today's world," she wrote in "Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History" (2000), a book considered to be the culmination of her life's work.

Elise Marie Biorn-Hansen was born in Oslo on July 6, 1920. At age 3 she moved with her parents to northern New Jersey, where her father, Joseph, worked as an engineer for Carrier, the air-conditioning manufacturer, and her mother, Birgit, who had trained to be a nurse, was a massage therapist. She graduated from Douglass College (now part of [Rutgers University](#)). After moving to Syracuse, where her family had resettled, she met and married [Kenneth Boulding](#), an economist and poet, in 1941.

The marriage lasted more than half a century, until Mr. Boulding's death in 1993. In addition to her daughter, who lives in Wayland, Mass., she is survived by four sons: Russell, of Bloomington, Ind.; Mark, of Englewood, Colo.; Philip, of Olalla, Wash.; and William, of Durham, N.C.; 16 grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

For much of the first 25 years of their marriage, the couple and their children moved to accommodate Mr. Boulding's academic travels.

Among other places, they lived in Nashville and in Ames, Iowa, where Ms. Boulding completed an M.A. at Iowa State, and spent many years in Ann Arbor, Mich. There, in the early 1960s, when peace studies — an interdisciplinary field that examines violent and nonviolent behavior in personal, political and historical contexts and the sources and resolution of conflict — was emerging as a legitimate program of inquiry, she helped found the scholarly organization the [International Peace Research Association](#). She also pursued a doctorate at the University of Michigan and ran unsuccessfully for Congress as an opponent of the Vietnam War.

While she was working on her dissertation, the family moved to Boulder, Colo., and in 1968 Ms. Boulding became the leader of the [Women's International League of Peace and Freedom](#), the antiwar group whose first president was [Jane Addams](#). At the University of Colorado at Boulder, she founded the program in peace studies, and later, after she moved to Dartmouth, she helped build the program there as well.

Ms. Boulding's other books include "[The Underside of History: A View of Women Through Time](#)" (1975, revised 1992); "Women in the Twentieth Century World" (1977); and "Children's Rights and the Wheel of Life" (1978).

She often said her path in life was determined by World War II. When she was a girl, she recalled, her mother had been homesick for Norway, and young Elise conceived of that country as a haven, a place to hold in reserve as a retreat, where she would always be safe. That vision was shattered in 1940 by the Nazi invasion of Norway.

“And that was when I realized that there was no safe place on earth,” she said. “And I knew that I had found my life’s mission.”