

Maria Bradford

Maria Bradford, 85, of 1324 Main St., Grinnell, died of cancer Sunday, Dec. 8, at her home.

A memorial service will be conducted at 2 p.m. Friday in Herrick Chapel on the Grinnell College campus. The Smith Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Her body was donated to the University of Iowa College of Medicine.

Surviving are two daughters, Maria Paulsen of Berlin, Germany, and Nancy Frank of Essex, Mass.; two sons, Lewis of Chicago and Walter of Evanston, Ill.; and seven grandchildren.

Memorials contributions in Mrs. Bradford's name may be made to the Fine Arts Department of Grinnell College.

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She was born Maria Gerson in Berlin in 1911. She was educated to be a governess.

She emigrated to New York in 1937 and later worked as a governess for a family in Madison, Wis. She was married to Curtis Bradford in 1941 and remained

there while he taught English literature at the University of Wisconsin. They later lived in Rockford, Ill., before coming to Grinnell in 1946 when Dr. Bradford accepted a faculty post at Grinnell College.

Mrs. Bradford worked as a nursing assistant at the former Grinnell General Hospital until her retirement in 1986.

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From Berlin to Grinnell: Maria Bradford's life is remembered

By NANCY FRANK

Maria Bradford, born Maria Gerson, died early Sunday, Dec. 8, after a relatively short and almost painless fight with cancer.

Maria was born in Berlin in 1911, the third and last child of a Jewish physician and his wife. Maria was educated to be a kindergarten teacher and would have remained happily in Berlin except for Hitler's rise to power. Though raised Lutheran, by 1935 Maria was forced to wear an arm band that proclaimed her Jewish heritage. In 1937, on one of the last boats out, Maria arrived at Ellis Island with the clothes on her back, a blanket and \$35. She became the governess for a family in Madison, Wis., where she met and in 1941 married Dr. Curtis Bradford, at that time instructor of English literature at the University of Wisconsin. Maria was fortunate in her flight; her mother died in Theresienstadt, and of her family only her two brothers survived by Holocaust.

After short sojourns at Rockford College, Illinois, and the armed services, Maria and Curtis arrived in Grinnell in 1946 with the first two of their four children, Maria (Polly) and Lewis, and Walter on

Guest Appearance

the way. By 1949 they were happily ensconced at 1324 Main. Here they were joined by Nancy. Over the years Maria enjoyed her role as a professor's wife. Students and faculty were always welcome in her home, and both Curtis and Maria enjoyed entertaining newcomers to the college community.

However, Maria always maintained that her life began at 55 when she started working as a nursing assistant at Grinnell General Hospital. After Curtis's death of cancer in 1969, this occupation kept Maria happy and busy until her retirement in 1986. She was a force to be reckoned with, and needless to say there was no slacking on her shift! But she was never too busy to teach patients or staff the latest folk dance steps or the perfect exercise for their stomach muscles.

After her retirement at 75, life was filled with travel. Maria enjoyed trips to Australia, Fiji, Alaska, Kenya and Europe, not to mention frequent trips to visit her children and seven grandchildren in Chicago, Massachusetts and Berlin. When not on the road, Maria could often be seen around Grinnell walking or biking. If you don't recognize Maria so far, perhaps the description "the little white-haired lady on the bicycle" will bring her to mind. Grinnell will miss her and so will we.

Nancy Frank, Maria Bradford's daughter, lives in Essex, Mass.

H-R Dec. 9, 1996

H-R Dec. 12, 1996