

H-R December 21, 1987

Margaret Kiesel dies at 79

Margaret Matlack Kiesel, 79, a writer, educator, feminist and civil rights activist, died of cancer at her home in Grinnell Saturday, Dec. 19.

A memorial service will be held at a date to be announced. The family requests that memorial contributions be made to the Jeanne Burkle Scholarship Fund at Grinnell College.

Ms. Kiesel was born July 4, 1908, in St. Louis, Mo., the daughter of Henry W. and Mer-ta Johnson Matlack. Her father was associated with Grinnell College for more than 30 years as a member of the music faculty and in administration.

Ms. Kiesel received her B.A. degree at Grinnell College in 1930 and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. After receiving her M.A. degree at Oberlin College in 1932, she held teaching and administrative posts at Oberlin, Cornell College, Grinnell and Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn.

She was married to Paul F. Kiesel in 1945. The couple lived in Excelsior, Minn., and in Marshalltown before Mr. Kiesel's retirement. In 1970 they returned to Grinnell where Mr. Kiesel died in 1979.

A long-time women's rights advocate, Ms. Kiesel was a member of the Iowa Women's Political Caucus, a member and past president of the League of Women Voters in Grinnell, and a member of the state board of the latter organization.

She was also the founder and first coordinator of the Grinnell chapter of Peace Links, a national organization, and had

served as president of the board of the Grinnell Day Care Center. In 1981 she was named Feminist of the Year by the Grinnell chapter of the National Organization of Women.

A writer and historian, Ms. Kiesel wrote extensively on the career of Hallie Flanagan Davis, American theater luminary who was a 1911 graduate of Grinnell College, and on the life and work of American novelist and Iowa native Ruth Suckow. She was also a member of the Ruth Suckow Memorial Association and editor of its newsletter.

Ms. Kiesel wrote a history of Grinnell College's Alumni Association in 1986 and at the time of her death was completing a sociological and educational history of women in Grinnell. She had also written an architectural and historical account of Grinnell's Herrick Chapel. In 1986 Ms. Kiesel was named honorary marshal at the college's commencement exercises.

Ms. Kiesel was a member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. She served a number of terms on the St. Paul's Bishop's Committee and taught in the church school. She was a member of the Christian Concerns Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Iowa.

She is survived by four sisters, Mary Davenport, Jane Rutherford and Laura Wieman, all of Grinnell, and Constance Wieman of Staunton, Va. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband and a brother, David J. Matlack.

Margaret Kiesel memorial set

A memorial service for Margaret Kiesel, 79, who died at her home Dec. 19, will be conducted at 2 p.m. Monday, Dec. 28, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Grinnell.

The body has been cremated. Burial of the ashes will be in

Hazelwood Cemetery.

Memorials in Ms. Kiesel's name may be made to the Jeanne Burkle Scholarship Fund at Grinnell College, in care of the Smith Funeral Home.