

Priscilla B. Grace
March 2, 1907 – November 9, 2011

Priscilla (Bartol) Grace, wife of the Reverend Gerald F. Gilmore, died at the Royal Megansett Nursing Home in North Falmouth on November 9, 2011 at the age of 104. Born a Boston Brahmin, Priscilla became anything but during her long and adventurous life. She was flying airplanes - biplanes with open cockpits - ten years after they were invented and once, in 1926, accepted an invitation from a submarine officer to submerge in Boston Harbor. Descended from the Cabots and Hemenways of Boston and the Bartols of Lancaster, MA, Priscilla grew up on Beacon Hill and remembered horses hauling coal up the Hill in the winter when she was a girl. She would give the horses a lump of sugar as they rested and watch the coal slide down the chute into the coal bin in the basement. She also remembered being taken to school in a horse and carriage and being allowed to knit socks at school for the soldiers during World War I. She later became an expert and prolific knitter who could knit and read aloud at the same time, sometimes adding suspense to the story by pausing, at critical moments, to count stitches aloud as well. She remembered Civil War veterans marching in Memorial Day parades at Lancaster when she was a child.

While other young women were coming out, going to debutante balls and marrying early, Priscilla was driving out West in her Pierce Arrow, seeing the country and becoming an outstanding athlete. Tennis, badminton, field hockey and swimming were her favorite sports. During the early 1930's she was Massachusetts women's badminton champion and, with her partner, Massachusetts women's doubles tennis champion. She also played center halfback on the American women's field hockey team against England. She played tennis frequently into her 80's.

In 1935 Priscilla married Frederick (Ted) Randolph Grace, a graduate student of Greek archeology, soon to become a teaching fellow in the Fine Arts Department at Harvard. He introduced her to the worlds of ancient art, classical music and liberal politics and they soon had four children. After Pearl Harbor, Ted enlisted in the Navy and was posted to Cherry Point, NC where Priscilla joined him with the children. In November, 1942 Ted was killed in a Navy plane accident leaving Priscilla with four children under six years old. She returned to Massachusetts, raised her children and, as the oldest were starting to think about college, Priscilla decided it was time for

her to go to college as well. She entered Radcliffe College as a freshman in the class of 1958 soon to be followed by her two oldest sons who became members of the Harvard classes of 1959 and 1960. After Radcliffe, Priscilla earned a Master of Science in Social Work at Boston University. From 1961 to 1975 Priscilla served as the School Psychologist at the Shady Hill School in Cambridge which her children had previously attended. She was also active in civic affairs, serving on the board of the South End Day Nursery School in Boston, volunteering at the Learning Center for the Deaf in Framingham and supporting the work of the League of Women Voters and the World Federalist Association. She also supported the work of Ted's sister, Virginia Randolph Grace, an archeologist at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens and the work of Ted's Harvard colleague, George Hanfmann, in Sardis, Turkey. Early on during the AIDS epidemic, she joined a hospice group caring for patients dying of AIDS related infections.

Priscilla never lost her taste for adventure. Once, when she was in her eighties, a friend asked what she could do in return for Priscilla's hospitality and friendship. Priscilla replied "Well, I've never been up in a hot air balloon." Several weeks later, Priscilla was looking down at the countryside from a basket suspended beneath a hot air balloon.

Then, when Priscilla was 88 years old and had been a widow for 54 years, she married the Reverend Gerald F. Gilmore, a retired Episcopalian minister who had once been a student of Ted's at Harvard. They were a remarkable couple, active in liberal political circles and civic affairs and celebrating holidays and family occasions with their respective extended families. Because of their advanced age, they celebrated their wedding anniversary every month. They were an inspiration to their families and all who knew and loved them.

Priscilla is survived by her husband, Gerald F. Gilmore of Orleans, MA, and members of his family, by her children: John S. Grace of Belmont, MA, Judith Grace Stetson of Woods Hole, MA, Nicholas A. Grace of Marion, MA and Daniel G. Grace of Casper, WY; by four grandchildren and by three great-grandchildren. Memorial services will be private. Burial will be at Eastwood Cemetery, Lancaster, MA.