

Memorial Minute for Kathryn Pyne Addelson
Written by Elizabeth V. Spelman, at the December 12, 2018 Faculty Meeting

Kathryn Pyne Addelson, Mary Huggins Gamble Professor Emerita at Smith, died in the early summer of this year.

A Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Indiana University, Kathy received the Ph.D. in Philosophy from Stanford. She came to Smith in 1972 as Associate Professor of Philosophy.

Kathy had high hopes for what philosophy could contribute to life within and outside the academy. She worried that how philosophers actually behave could dash such hopes. Though she never put it quite this way, she regularly gave those around her good reason to think that she regarded most philosophy graduate departments (and perhaps more than a few undergraduate ones) to be in many respects Boot Camps for Bullies.

True, Kathy herself could be quite tough, formidable. But not a bully. She did have a kind of fierce presence, especially when acting in behalf of people shoved to the margins of the classroom, the conference hall, the town meeting. Kathy simply did not abide chauvinist pigs; she had no patience with queen bees; she did not hesitate to poke and prod sacred cows. Suspicious of people on high horses, she also always was ready to laugh at herself.

Kathy regarded her scholarly and activist work as all of a piece. Though early in her career she published in staid philosophy journals, her sense of the importance of understanding versions of feminism, socialism, anarchism and other powerful, complex and complexly related social movements led her to both support and publish in path-breaking venues, particularly feminist ones. Her impressive list of publications include two books: *Impure Thoughts: Essays on*

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Philosophy, Feminism and Ethics, and Moral Passages: Notes Toward a Collectivist Moral Theory. She not infrequently taught with others in our department, and created alliances with colleagues from other disciplines here and elsewhere—at Smith, for example, with Frederique Marglin in Anthropology, and Martha Ackelsberg in Government. A close collaborator with Howard Becker and other Sociologists at Northwestern, Kathy entitled one of her more intriguing articles “Why Philosophers Should Become Sociologists (and Vice Versa).”

Kathy was one of the early and enduring supporters of the Society for Women in Philosophy—an organization with chapters across this country and around the world. In 1994 she was named “Woman Philosopher of the Year” by the organization.

At Smith Kathy helped to build the foundation for the Project on Women and Social Change and to obtain underwriting for a faculty group interested in exploring the relation between science and the cultural contexts in which it emerges.

Wherever Kathy lived, she became passionately involved in community matters. During years teaching in Chicago she was active in a number of civil rights groups. In Leverett, where she and her beloved husband Rich lived for the last 40 years of Kathy’s life, Kathy was crucial to the founding and maintenance of the Leverett Village Coop and the Rattlesnake Gutter Land Trust. A bit farther afield, she gave much time, energy and inspiration to Wellspring House, a shelter in Gloucester for homeless families.

A sparkling scholar, teacher, colleague and citizen, Kathy left behind a multitude of grateful admirers