

## **GRAY: Marion Simpson, 87**

GRAY: Marion Simpson, 87, of Freedom Drive, Montpelier, died Nov. 18, at Woodridge Nursing Home in Berlin. She was born on Feb. 17, 1917, in Lyndonville, the daughter of W. Arthur Simpson and Ruth Hoffman Simpson. She graduated from Lyndon Institute in 1935. She married Russell Gray in 1936, and they farmed in Kirby from 1946 to 1955, when they divorced. She graduated from Lyndon State College in 1958, and taught elementary school in St. Albans from 1958 to 1960. In 1960, she moved to Long Island and taught elementary school in Brentwood until she retired in 1982. She was a member of the Brentwood Teachers Association and served on the executive board from 1962 to 1982. From 1962 to 1978, she was the Brentwood delegate to the New York Teachers Convention and to the New York Teachers Retirement Convention from 1964 to 1974. For 19 years, as part of her union activities, she organized the Brentwood School System Dance Program, which annually raised \$10,000 to be used for children's scholarships. After she retired she returned to Vermont, to the Barre-Montpelier area, where she became active in the civic life of the state and local community. From 1984 to 1986, she worked tirelessly for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. In 1985, she organized the "Celebration of Ordinary Women's Lives" at Trinity College, where women spoke about their extraordinary lives. She was appointed to the Governor's Commission on Women by both Governors Madeleine Kunin and Howard Dean, serving from 1988 to 1998 and was active in the organization of the 1987 Women's State Fair in Barre. In 1999, at the Commission's gala, she was honored as a person who made "a difference for women." She was a ceaseless advocate and unpaid lobbyist for women's and seniors' issues. She joined the Older Women's League (OWL) in 1985 and served on the board of the Green Mountain Chapter for the rest of her life, as president from 1987 to 1989 and 1995 to 1999, and since then as Co-President. In 1990, she "starred" in a video produced by OWL, "Marion's Medication Mishaps", which warned about the dangers of drug interactions for seniors. She was active in COVE (Community of Vermont Elders), serving as president from

1989-1994. She had the knack of communicating with people of all ages, and was a board member of LEAD (Leadership, Education, Action, Diversity), an intergenerational organization which encouraged young women to take an active part in action and advocacy. She did not limit her activities to advocacy. She served the community wherever she could be useful. She was on the Board of Vermont Public Television from 1988 to 1992. She was appointed to the Health Policy Council by Governor Dean from 1992 to 1996. Since 1991, she served, when needed, as a public guardian appointed by the probate court for women who had no friends or relatives able to act for them. She was a member of the board of the Vermont Public Interest Group (VPIRG) from 2001-2004. In 2002, the Department of Aging and Disabilities presented her with the Governor's Service Award. She was a great reader, and an ardent believer in the importance and power of the written word. She organized a book group of women whose average age was over 80. Although a person of modest means, she was a major benefactor of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier and served on its board from 1998. She was also a prime mover in the expansion of the children's library. In both the public and private spheres, her generosity was unstinting, and she was a model to countless women of all ages. She is survived by her daughter Patience Rosebery and a son Arthur Gray and his wife Donna, all of Montpelier. She has two grandsons Matthew and Eric Gray and one great-grandchild. She is also survived by one brother, Leland Simpson of Lyndonville, and a sister, Dorothy Litcher of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Visiting hours are 6-8 p.m., Monday, Nov. 22, at the Guare and Sons Funeral Home, 30 School Street, Montpelier. The funeral will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at the Unitarian Church, Main and School Streets, Montpelier, at 2 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in to the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 135 Main St., Montpelier, VT 05602.