

First Lady of Light Dies at 103

Connie Scoville Small known in lighthouse circles as the First Lady of Light died at the age of 103 this past Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2005, at the Mark Wentworth Home in Portsmouth, NH.

Connie, who was famous in the lighthouse preservation movement, had given over 550 lectures on lighthouse life and authored the popular book "The Lighthouse Keepers Wife". It was former President George Bush, in a speech, at the ceremony in Northport, Maine, concluding the Maine Lights Program, who personally gave Connie Small the title of "First Lady of Light."

Born on June 4, 1901 in Lubec, Maine, the daughter of Ira and Mabel (Myers) Scoville, Connie's father was the keeper and one of the original crew of the Quoddy Head Life Saving Station in Lubec.

"Connie will be missed by us all," said Tim Harrison, president of the American Lighthouse Foundation. "She was an inspiration to everyone in the lighthouse movement," said Harrison, who continued, "She was a warm and genuine person who never hesitated to share her memories and stories of lighthouse living from the days of yesteryear."

Connie's husband, Elson, was no stranger to the Maine coast. His father, Fred Small, served with the U.S. Life-Saving Service on the coast of Maine with one of his longer tenures at Cross Island Life Saving Station. Although Elson did not follow his father's footsteps, he came close. He joined the United States Lighthouse Service, the sister organization of the Life-Saving Service. With new bride Connie at his side, Elson Small went on to serve as the lighthouse keeper at Lubec Channel Lighthouse in Lubec from 1920-1922, Avery Rock Lighthouse in Machias Bay from 1922-1926, Seguin Island Light at the mouth of the Kennebec River, from 1926-1930, St. Croix River Lighthouse near Calais from 1930-1948, and Portsmouth Light in New Hampshire from 1946-1948. It wasn't until she was 85, at the urging of others, Connie wrote her highly successful book recounting the years at those lighthouses.

Although the book is a great history tale of lighthouse life in the early to mid 1900's, it's also one of the greatest lighthouse love stories ever told, said Harrison, who went on to say that he recommends the book to anyone interested in learning about lighthouse life on the New England coast.

In 2001, the American Lighthouse Foundation honored Connie with a big birthday bash for her 100th birthday. Escorted by uniformed Coast Guard personnel and brought to the party in a limousine, Connie said at the time that the gigantic party was one of the highlights of her life.

In the past several years, Connie had been interviewed by dozens of reporters and had appeared in a number of film documentaries about lighthouses and lighthouse life. One of her favorite places to visit was the Museum of Lighthouse History in Wells, where she loved to chat with the visitors and autograph her book.

Connie's memories included meeting the first Flying Santa of the Lighthouses, Bill Wincapaw and then meeting his grandson this past December at Portsmouth Harbor Light, when the modern day Flying Santa of the Lighthouses visited the Coast Guard personnel at the station where Connie and her husband last served.

Connie often recounted the story of her first visit with her husband to the Lubec Channel Light, which is a spark plug style lighthouse in Lubec Channel and totally surrounded by water. That first visit was at low tide. Connie took one look at the thirty feet of black iron and said her heart went down to her toes. Being afraid of heights she told her husband, "I can never climb up there." He replied, "Sure you can, I'll be right behind you." He then continued by saying, "Just look up and never look down", which then became the motto of Connie's life.

The funeral was held Friday, January 28th at 11am at the First Congregational Church, on State Road in Elliot, Maine.

Her family has requested that donations in her memory be made to the American Lighthouse Foundation, P.O. Box 889, Wells, Maine 04090.