

Memorial Minutes 2001

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY
MEETING *of* FRIENDS

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Donald G. Baker

We give thanks to the Lord for the life of Donald G. Baker, member of Weare MM, and an active Friend all his life. Donald was born on the Haverford College campus and grew up spending winters in Pennsylvania and summers in New Hampshire. In the winter, he was a scholar, who attended school at Haverford Friends School, Westtown School, and Haverford College. In the summer, he was a natural history explorer, hiker, and trail maker, who also helped the local farmers in haying the meadows.

Along with his wife, Margaret, and four redheaded children, he helped restart meetings for worship in the historic Schuylkill Meetinghouse (PA), and served as clerk of the meeting. He also traveled in ministry throughout Philadelphia YM under concern about alcohol consumption, and served as clerk of the YM's Temperance & Social Order Committee.

When he retired to New Hampshire, he helped to restart meetings for worship in the historic Henniker Meetinghouse, as well as to maintain the annual meetings at Quaker City and Pittsfield. He served many years as clerk of Weare MM. As clerk of Dover QM, he was instrumental in starting the New Hampshire AFSC, and the All-New Hampshire Friends Gathering. At the YM level, he served on Peace & Social Concerns, Finance Committee, and Permanent Board.

He was a classics scholar, who received his doctorate from Harvard University, and taught Greek and Latin at Ursinus College for forty years. He enjoyed discussions and debates with others over the meanings of words, geography, or history. In his retirement years, he was active in all the local historical societies. He encouraged all to keep learning, no matter our age.

He was an avid soccer player from an early age. He played into his 70s, coached for more than 40 years, and was a founding member of the National Soccer Coaches Association, receiving their Honor Award in 1980. He encouraged many players and coaches to emphasize playing for the joy of the sport and good sportsmanship, more than for scores and

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winning. Donald was also known for writing letters to local newspapers and speaking up at town and school meetings over issues of education, truth, fairness, and peace, on which he held deep convictions.

He died six months after his beloved wife and companion of 67 years, leaving behind four children, seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren, plus a large tract of land he had carefully preserved for future generations to enjoy.

—WEARE MONTHLY MEETING, DOVER QUARTERLY MEETING

Thomas Bassett

We celebrate the great gifts of the Spirit that infused the life of our Friend, Thomas Day Seymour Bassett. He was a devoted leader and servant of the Monthly Meeting in Burlington, Vermont, from its beginning more than forty years ago to the very end of his life, on January 24th, 2001.

Tom accepted his gifts of ministry and pastoral care, sharing them abundantly within our meeting community and beyond it. His vocal ministry was based in his Christian faith. Clear, straightforward, and hopeful, it was often sung to us in his rich tenor. We were further enriched by his example of public prayer. Yet his most important pastoral work may have been his quiet determination to maintain the web of connection within our community. He did this by conscientiously welcoming newcomers, drawing them into the life of the meeting, and encouraging them to consider membership. He was faithful in continuing that work through conversation, correspondence, and visitation with distant members.

Visiting was a ministry to which Tom was utterly devoted. He loved to travel in his own Northwest QM, where over the years he served in many capacities, including clerk. He also loved to travel throughout New England Yearly Meeting, where his extensive committee work (Permanent Board, Ministry & Counsel, Nominating, Archives, and Ecumenical/Interfaith Relations, among others) always seemed to serve as an opportunity for visitation, for meeting Friends old and new. Together with his wife, Alice (an active member of Burlington

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College Street Congregational Church), he attended Friends General Conference Gatherings throughout the U.S. As a representative of his YM, to the Friends World Committee for Consultation, he journeyed to Honduras, the British Isles, Canada, and Cuba. The road to a Quaker meetinghouse was never too long. He faithfully brought back to those of us in his home meeting a sense of connection and possibility within the wider Quaker world. He has shown us that love travels, gathers us together in blessing, and lifts us up.

Thomas Bassett was our historian. Having lived through our entire history as a monthly meeting, he delighted in sharing that story and those of the individual Friends who had given it life. He was our teacher. As a member of the YM committee which undertook the most recent revision of *Faith and Practice*, and well versed in the writings of our Quakers forbearers, he had much knowledge to impart. Yet he could be the most faithful and eager student at our adult religious education programs when others accepted the task of leadership. He was also our connection to the ecumenical movements in Burlington and in Vermont, keeping us well represented in these places, and attracting other Friends to that work.

If you come to Burlington FM, held in the old carriage barn behind the Bassett family home up on N. Prospect Street, you will see the most tangible of Tom's many gifts to his religious community. The buildings and the books, the trees and the gardens that he tended and loved, are now in the stewardship of our meeting, in large part through his generosity. In this special place, we have an ongoing opportunity to be led by Spirit into lives of witness and service to the wider world.

Thomas Bassett leaves us a rich and varied legacy. His boldness in daring to speak his truth is no small part in it. He did not remain for long in the realm of correct and polite conversation. And who among us can forget the exasperating telephone call at seven in the morning, seeking clarity in our comments at last night's committee meeting, or reminding us of a task we had allowed to go undone? Tom spoke up and minced no words when what he experienced inwardly was

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part of a bigger truth. Yet when his words were too sharp, he was able to bow and bend, to seek forgiveness.

He was beloved, and will be sorely missed.

Last autumn, Tom was asked to speak about his religious faith at a meeting of the Vermont Ecumenical Council. In closing, he chose these words from St. Benedict:

Gracious God,

Give us the diligence to seek after you,

The patience to wait for you,

The wisdom to discover you,

The eyes to behold you,

A heart to meditate on you,

The intelligence to understand you,

And a life to proclaim you,

Through the power of the Spirit of Jesus.

—BURLINGTON FRIENDS MEETING, NORTHWEST QUARTERLY MEETING

Jane T. Bowles

South Berkshire MM mourns the loss of Jane T. Bowles, one of the founding members of our meeting. Although she had been unable to attend regularly in the last few years, we were aware of her abiding relationship to our meeting.

Born in Westport MA, on July 4, 1908, the daughter of Wilbur and Elizabeth Folger Thomas, she was a graduate of Friends Select School in Philadelphia and Earlham College in Indiana. She also completed coursework at Simmons College of Social Work in Boston and did casework in Media, PA. She took a post at Ginling College in Nanking China, and was married there early in 1932 to Gordon Bowles, son of Tokyo Friends Girls School missionaries in Tokyo.

During the years 1933 to 1937, she traveled with her husband on foot, horseback, and train across Southern Asia, recording Gordon's anthropological research. Returning to the U.S., she worked with him correlating that research with his earlier work in western China. In Boston, she worked with the American Friends Service Committee, coordinating seminars, before relocating to Hawaii in 1938 where she helped establish the AFSC office in Honolulu.

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After Pearl Harbor, Jane and Gordon relocated to Washington, DC. There she helped direct the establishment of the International House and directed Public Relations for the Sidwell Friends School. In 1951, she moved to Tokyo where she soon became American Program Officer for the Fulbright Commission in Japan. Gordon and Jane retired to Monterey, MA, and Gordon died on November 10, 1991.

Jane was a lifelong member of the Religious Society of Friends and was clerk of Connecticut Valley QM's Ministry & Counsel. She also was South Berkshire's representative to YM Ministry & Counsel, as well as serving for several years on South Berkshire's Ministry & Counsel.

For many years, she and her late husband had a close relationship and interest in the Woolman Hill Conference and Retreat Center in Deerfield. Jane's most recent concern was in acquiring and rebuilding the meetinghouse given by North Dartmouth MM. Taken apart, the pieces were numbered and transported to Woolman Hill; she did not live to see the meetinghouse reconstructed.

She leaves two daughters, Barbara B. Swann of Monterey and Anne B. Pipal of Alfred, NY; a brother, T. Folger Thomas of West Brandywine, PA; and a granddaughter, Jennifer H. Swann of Manhattan, NY. A memorial service was held on Saturday, May 19, 2001, under the care of the South Berkshire MM.
—SOUTH BERKSHIRE MONTHLY MEETING, CONNECTICUT VALLEY
QUARTERLY MEETING

William Kreidler

With grateful hearts, we thank the Creator for Bill Kreidler and the gift of his ministry both to the world and among Friends. With sorrow, we feel the grief of his very present absence. Bill died in Boston on June 10, 2000, in the home he shared with his partner, David Aronstein. Bill left us with the gift of his peacemaking work to the world and his faithful personal ministry among Friends. He is sorely missed.

While working as a kindergarten teacher during the conflicts of Boston's school desegregation, Bill was called to the work of creating "the peaceable classroom," prompted by the

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Edward Hicks painting, “The Peaceable Kingdom,” which hung above his desk. Led to teach children to resolve conflicts without violence and particularly to enable teachers to bring these methods to children, Bill stepped into a calling that became his life’s work and one of his gifts to the world. With curricula for children of many ages, numerous books, and countless lectures and workshops, Bill’s work touched teachers and children around the world. In the last years of his life, Bill’s ministry brought him to work with groups from the Middle East, Northern Ireland, and America’s inner cities.

Bill was among the founders of Beacon Hill FM and always marked each year’s anniversary of his arrival at Beacon Hill. He also felt a special connection to the community around FLGC (Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns) where he served as clerk and worked to create dialogue among Friends across the theological spectrum.

Bill’s love for Beacon Hill MM and the Religious Society of Friends was especially revealed in his encouragement of seekers and his unflagging availability for clearness committees. As a community, we were always blessed when he faithfully insisted that our process and practice align with the Spirit that calls us together.

In his faithful insistence, Bill seldom hesitated to challenge Friends to live up to the Light they had been given. As a gay man in a Society that could be variously vague, blind, or hostile to issues of sexuality, he lovingly challenged us. He challenged us not for the sake of his own comfort or peace in the Society, but because vagueness, blindness, and hostility have no place in the Light where Friends strive to live.

These loving challenges were but one aspect of Bill’s larger ministry among Friends. Bill’s own faith journey involved the encouragement of others collective and individual journeys. This work was manifest in his workshops on topics such as prayer and forgiveness and in his encouragement of the practice of spiritual autobiography among us. As a student of the Catholic saints Julian of Norwich and Teresa of Avila, he taught us with their powerful examples of spunky faithfulness. And in personal contact, heart-to-heart, that of God in Bill

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touched that of God in us, often revealing the quiet glory of what had long been hid.

Bill also ministered to us by opening himself and revealing his own struggles as a creature following a Creator. Bill's public speaking was punctuated with provocative questions and bridged by stories in which he made himself vulnerable to teach us, revealing his very human flaws and fears. In his plenary talk at the 1994 Gathering of Friends General Conference—"You Want Me To Do What?!"—he taught us to recount our spiritual lives by sharing his own. He encouraged us to face our wounds and imperfections by revealing his own. And in discussing leadings taken or let lie, he taught us to listen for leadings while accepting the unconditional love of their Author.

As Bill faced the spiritual "lab work" of his personal journey with AIDS, he increasingly found comfort in Jesus as his companion. Confessing Christ among Friends, he nonetheless struggled with some of "Christ's friends" in both history and the modern world. His example of faithfulness and authenticity has inspired many Friends to "come out" as Christians and testify to the gift of a personal relationship with Jesus in their lives.

Bill's death from AIDS leaves us with the memory of his ministry and with the changes he wrought in our hearts and lives. We recall his wit and spice, his compassion and joy. We remember his love of children (especially babies) and we smile to recall his tap dancing at FGC to the choral accompaniment of the "Free Grace Undying Love Full Gospel Quaker Choir Sing and Be Saved." As we travel together without his company, we may be comforted by the words with which Bill closed his 1993 NEYM keynote:

"Through many perils, toils, and snares, I have already come

'Twas Grace that brought me safe thus far....' and you fill in the rest."

—BEACON HILL MONTHLY MEETING, SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING