

Memorial Minutes 2013

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY
MEETING *of* FRIENDS

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NEYM
2013

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Bernice Simpson Douglas (1908–2012)

Bernice Douglas was born December 7, 1908, to Henry and Elizabeth Simpson of Brunswick, Maine. Her roots in Brunswick were deep, going back to Simpson ancestors of the 1700s. During World War I, the family moved to York, Maine, where her father managed a large farm. When the family returned to Brunswick after the war, Bernice attended Brunswick High School and Farmington State Normal School. After graduating, she taught school in Augusta, Maine. She married C. Merton Douglas of Brunswick in 1935. When Merton took over his father's plumbing and heating business, she gave up teaching to manage his office and do the bookkeeping.

Bernice was a member of Durham Friends Meeting and was especially interested in the activities of the United Society of Friends Women (USFW), serving in the local and New England organizations, and she attended triennial meetings of the international body. She often read more books in the USFW Reading Course than anyone in the Meeting. She loved young people and related well with them all her life. She taught the high school Sunday School class and led the youth group for several years. Bernice welcomed young people into her home, always glad to see them. They found her witty, clever, wise, and offering good advice. Her children's stories during meeting for worship were valued by all. She sometimes recited poems which conveyed a message. She was active in the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends, serving on the Program and Missionary Committees. In her warm, loving way, she provided hospitality for many visiting Friends. Bernice enjoyed organizing evenings of board games, stories, scavenger hunts and Bible verse quizzes for the Sunday School at her home in Brunswick. She continued many of these activities until shortly before her death.

Bernice and her husband had no children but helped raise her sister's three sons, who were very small when their mother died. She was known as a welcoming and generous neighbor in her local community—and was affectionately called “Aunt Bee” by many.

She died June 26, 2012, at the age of 103.

—DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING, FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING

Proctor Houghton (1916–2012)

Proctor Houghton, a socially concerned businessman, devoted husband, and active Quaker, was born on November 24, 1916, in Worcester, Massachusetts. He graduated from Wesleyan University

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in 1939 and became an active alumnus receiving the Distinguished Service Award and also funded the Houghton Scholarship, awarded annually based on activities, interests, big ambition and vigorous effort rather than grades. During World War II, he was employed by Allied Chemical, helping to bring new defense plants on-line. Proctor lived most of his life in Newton, Massachusetts, with a summer home in Brewster.

He was the long-time president of the Houghton Chemical Corporation of Boston. Proctor recognized his responsibility to the employees of his company. He was concerned for their safety and wellbeing, as well as their families. Under Proctor, Houghton Chemical instituted a significant profit-sharing plan as well as a retirement trust and bonus program. The company also acted responsibly in the community. It made a priority to protect the environment both in its daily operations and when transporting hazardous cargo.

Proctor was a public-spirited and generous person and was active in a variety of charitable and philanthropic organizations. As a young man, he was an Eagle Scout, becoming co-founder of a troop in Wellesley, Massachusetts. He was president and director of the Ford Hall Forum, the oldest free public-education lecture series in America.

As a Quaker, Proctor had a strong concern for world peace. He was an active participant in and supporter of the American Friends Service Committee. He was founder and treasurer of the Boston Chapter of Business Executives Move for New Priorities, an organization especially active during the Vietnam War, when he was a member of its national council. In addition, he was active in the Union of Concerned Scientists and the United Nations Association.

Proctor served as clerk of Friends Meeting at Cambridge from 1957 to 1961. He enjoyed moving the business along and was pleased when business was completed by 9:00, as it usually was. In addition, he was on the Advisory Committee and Trustees, as well as the Pope Fund. For decades, he served on the New England Yearly Meeting Board of Managers, where he deeply valued his friendships with Russell DeBurlon and Andrew Towl. We in Cambridge Meeting especially remember those Sunday mornings when Proctor would offer one of his trucks so huge amounts of clothing, collected by the AFSC Clothing Room, could be sent to Philadelphia. Members of the meeting would gather in two long lines to put the clothing in the truck.

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Proctor liked to be appropriate in everything except dress. He favored garish jackets and two-toned shoes, clothing reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s.

We cannot speak of Proctor without mentioning his loving wife of 63 years, Eloise Kautz Houghton. Proctor was reserved and Eloise was outgoing. They were an openly affectionate couple.

Halloween was a special day at the Houghtons. They took the notion of “trick or treat” literally and would ask the children to perform a trick in order to receive a treat. The children were happy to do so and often came prepared, for they knew they would receive a specially prepared treat. Neighborhood folk who might be alone were invited for the festivities.

Proctor died on January 12, 2012. At his memorial meeting on May 20, he was remembered as an anchor of the meeting, as a grounding force in its activities. At the same time, he was remembered for his hearty laughter. We are thankful for his presence among us.

— FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE, SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING

Glenice Hutchins (1931–2012)

Glenice Mae Caton Hutchins was born August 4, 1931, in Durham, Maine, to Maurice and Elizabeth Caton. She died on June 23, 2012. Her spirit lives on in her family and friends.

She lived as a child on a farm one mile from the Durham Friends Meeting, where she participated in the Sunday School, Youth Group and Falmouth Junior Quarterly Meeting. Always a Quaker, she embodied compassion, courage and grace, truly loving others non-judgmentally and peacefully. She lived a life of frugality, simplicity, and integrity. She was an inspiration to those who knew her. She lived her faith knowing she was a disciple of God’s kingdom, living the present moment and enjoying every phase of her life.

Glenice graduated from Lisbon High School and Fisher College. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of Southern Maine in 1970 and her master’s in 1978.

Glenice lived and worked for others. She taught elementary school in Falmouth for 23 years. Her students loved her, as she loved them. After retirement, she worked as a part-time receptionist at Cedars Nursing Care Center in Portland from 1993 to 2012. She had a strong commitment to education and never stopped learning, attending the life-long learning classes at the University of Southern Maine after her retirement. She encouraged others in their

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education as well, buying all the books for her grandchildren's further education. She was also a member of the College Club of Portland, which awards scholarships to local young women.

She was a member of United Teaching Profession, Falmouth Education Association, Maine Teachers Association, National Education Association, and Falmouth Historical Society. She volunteered for the American Cancer Society as a Reach-to-Recovery volunteer after her first breast cancer surgery and for the Committee for Living with Cancer Conference held yearly in Augusta. She also volunteered for the Salvation Army, correcting Bible study lessons for prisoners.

While living in Falmouth she was active in Portland Friends Meeting, serving as clerk (1965–66 and 1978–79) and on Ministry & Counsel and the Finance Committee. Falmouth Quarterly Meeting was very important to her; she was clerk of Ministry & Counsel (1973–1976) and Clerk of Pastoral Care. She served the United Society of Friends Women of the New England Yearly Meeting of Friends as Stewardship Secretary. She was active in New England Yearly Meeting, serving on the Equalization Fund Committee from 1982 to 1988 and on the Student Loan Committee from 1994 to 1997. In the last years of Glenice's life, she returned to Durham Friends Meeting, where she served as clerk of Ministry & Counsel and on the Library Committee.

Glenice will be deeply missed by all who knew her. She is survived by her daughters, Beth Anne King and Donna J. Ross and her son Bradley Carl Hutchins. She was predeceased by her husband of 45 years, Wendell W. Hutchins; she is also survived by her partner of 12 years, Albert Anderson; seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Her memorial service was held June 26, 2012, at Durham Friends Meeting House.

—DURHAM MONTHLY MEETING, FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING

James Vincent (Tim) Nicholson (1926–2011)

James Vincent Nicholson was born October 22, 1926, in Philadelphia to Samuel Francis Nicholson and Evelyn Haworth Nicholson and was given the family nickname "Tim." He grew up in a Quaker household with his younger sisters, Frances and Joan. When the family moved to Westtown Township, they lived in a house overlooking the Westtown train station, much to Tim's delight. A favorite memory from Tim's childhood was the thrill of once riding

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in a Pennsylvania Railroad locomotive next to the engineer.

Tim began to study electricity as a young boy when he was inspired to improve the Lionel train set he received for Christmas. During his high school years at Westtown School, his electrical skills led to an interest in theatrical stage lighting. Before he graduated in 1944, a letter was sent to Tim's parents after Tim and his roommate were caught having wired their dorm room lights so they could remain on after curfew. The skill and care with which the wiring had been installed, however, was also noted.

Tim graduated from Earlham in 1948 with a degree in philosophy. As he contemplated his future, he realized that his true calling was indeed the world of theater. Tim then earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Carnegie Institute of Technology. After directing and stage-managing in regional theaters in Pittsburgh and Richmond, Virginia, Tim joined the theater department faculty in Boston University's School of Fine Arts. He taught lighting, design, stage management, and graduate directing at B.U. for 33 years, retiring in 1989. Throughout his life, whether attending a performance on Broadway or in Berlin, it was not unusual for him to be greeted by startled former students who recognized him by his distinctive height.

On the train *en route* to the start of their freshman year at Earlham College, Tim was introduced to Mary Ann Lippincott. Their courtship began while working backstage on school plays. Because she was so much shorter than Tim, Mary Ann often joked that when they danced together it wasn't "cheek to cheek" but "cheek to chest." Tim and Mary Ann married in 1950. They raised their three daughters (Suzy, Betsy, and Nancy) in the town of Belmont, Massachusetts. He and Mary Ann were dedicated members of Friends Meeting at Cambridge for 35 years. Tim began his retirement by supervising the meeting's extensive renovation.

After he and Mary Ann moved to Cartnel in 1994, their grandchildren looked forward to visiting the Crosslands' model trains with Granddad. Tim and Mary Ann were married for 52 years before Mary Ann passed away in 2003. In 2006, Tim became a Crosslands resident.

While Friends Meeting at Cambridge does not formally recognize individual elders, Tim Nicholson was a beloved and influential elder of the meeting. Over a period of more than 35 years as a member, his service to the meeting was thoughtful, consistent, dependable, and effective.

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He was neither shy about speaking nor was he a person who spoke often. When he spoke, he said something worth thinking about and he spoke succinctly and clearly.

He was a very deliberate clerk when he was responsible for a discernment or implementation process; he was careful to see that issues and complications were fully explored. Most often, on important matters, Tim would ask the group to take a second look and sometimes even a third look, often waiting until the next meeting to think about such matters, even when no dissent was voiced. Often our sense of what to do and how to do it would deepen. Tim came to meetings he clerked prepared to consider the range of issues he thought would help us in our discernment. Seldom did he begin with an expression of his own judgments, other than to report decisions he had made about such matters he thought minor, in case any member of the committee had differences with his judgment that such matters were minor.

When Tim was helping to draft a minute for a meeting, he would help us to patiently review a problematic sentence, and often our sense of what to say would deepen.

Though Tim himself was very measured and reasoned in his personal communications, he worked diligently to understand the concerns of others, however expressed.

After Tim's retirement from Boston University, Tim focused his energies for more than two years to work to renovate the Friends Center at the meeting. With Tim as clerk of both the Building Committee and of the Works, every detail was considered with care.

In addition to his work for Cambridge Meeting, Tim served on the Board of Managers of Investments and Permanent Funds of New England Yearly Meeting.

Quaker principles informed every aspect of Tim's family and public life. He valued clarity of thought and expression and chose his words deliberately. He was an attentive listener with a sincere interest in the people and the greater world around him. Although many would have wished for speedier decisions, his consideration of all viewpoints encouraged others to work for consensus.

His loving family will remember Tim always as a true Quaker gentleman.

— FRIENDS MEETING AT CAMBRIDGE, SALEM QUARTERLY MEETING

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Harold Adin Nomer, Jr. (1917-2012)

Harold Nomer died peacefully in his home overlooking Long Pond at East Hills, Wakefield, Rhode Island, on November 13, 2012, at the age of 95. A memorial service was held for him on December 29, 2012, under the care of the Westerly Monthly Meeting. "Hal," as he was known, was an active member of Westerly Meeting for 23 years.

Born on January 26, 1917, Hal spent his early years in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where his father was headmaster of Shady Side Academy, a boy's boarding school. Following his graduation from Shady Side, Hal attended and graduated from Williams College, his father's alma mater.

During his final two years at Williams, Hal spent summers in Europe with the Experiment in International Living, first as a group member in Germany and then as a leader of Experiment high school groups in France and Norway. In this co-ed experience, Hal spent a month in one country with a family and a month cycling and mountain climbing with his hosts. The Experiment in International Living was described as being the difference between seeing a country through a plate glass window and being a part of the warmth within.

During Hal's summer in Germany, his father accepted a position as headmaster of Friends Academy, a Quaker co-ed boarding school in Locust Valley, Long Island. This was a turning point in Hal's life. Here Hal attended his first Friends Meeting for Worship. Williams College had compulsory chapel during Hal's day, and a student received credit for attending a service of his persuasion. Hal attended various services and found he was most comfortable with Quaker meeting.

Following his commencement at Williams, which he was not moved to attend, Hal was employed by W. R. Grace & Company in New York, an import/export firm Hal was attracted to because it had no military contracts. Early in his career in finance at Grace, Hal was drafted for military service in World War II. Due to poor eyesight, he was assigned to the Medics and was trained as an x-ray technician at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington D.C. He spent two years teaching x-ray technicians at the Army School of Roentgenology in Memphis, Tennessee. When the army felt that it had a sufficient number of x-ray technicians, Hal was sent to Germany with a field hospital. There his summer in Germany with the Experiment stood

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him in good stead. Following V-J Day, Hal spent several months back in the States doing chest x-rays at Army discharge centers.

Following his discharge from the Army, Hal spent ten years as payroll supervisor at Grace before being assigned to the treasurer's office. During this time, he met and married Sally Hazard, a Wellesley graduate who had also been an Experiment leader. After two years living in Greenwich Village in New York and starting a family, which grew to two daughters and a son, the Nomers moved to the suburbs of Ardsley, Westchester County. They also spent weekends and vacations at the summer camp/family compound that Sally's father had bought in 1895 in Matunuck Hills, Rhode Island.

Hal joined Scarsdale Meeting and served on the New York Yearly Meeting finance committee. He also served ten years as treasurer of the New York Yearly Meeting Trustees' pooled funds and five years as a draft counselor with the Westchester Draft Counseling and Information Center. He and Sally started the recycling program at Ardsley before there were any organized municipal programs. He was on the board of directors for a nursing home, the Bethel Methodist Home and volunteered with the Westchester Fair Housing Committee for many years.

After 46 years with W. R. Grace & Company, Hal was offered, at age 70, a retirement package he could not turn down. In June of 1989, he and Sally moved to Rhode Island and built a year-round home. In Rhode Island, Hal served on the New England Yearly Meeting Finance Committee and also spent five years as treasurer of Yearly Meeting Sessions. He was also, at different times, the clerk and treasurer of the Westerly Monthly Meeting and recording clerk and treasurer of Rhode Island-Smithfield Quarter.

In addition to his involvement with Westerly Friends, Hal served as a volunteer at the Bay Campus of the Graduate School of Oceanography as well as Watershed Watch at the University of Rhode Island. He volunteered at Westerly Area Rest and Meals (WARM), as he had at homeless shelters in White Plains, New York, and also with the Literacy Volunteers in Westerly.

Hal lived his life with simple and honest intentions and he took thoughtful care in all that he did. He was always aware and appreciative of what others contributed and let them know; we all will miss his messages of appreciation. Despite the challenges of aging and illness, Hal continued to show others his appreciation for life, taking delight in watching the birds, squirrels, and chipmunks at the bird feeder and sharing a relaxed time with a friend, young or

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old.

Hal taught many generations of First Day School Bible study including his own son, Jonathan, who reflected at the memorial service that Hal always felt that the Bible was a book with some very practical lessons for life. Many are grateful to have received his teaching.

Hal was quick to remark on the cheerfulness of others around him but it was often the light he shared with others which inspired that cheerfulness. Hal often expressed his concern about not wanting to be a burden when, in fact, he worked to lighten the load of many.

Hal's concerns for others were very wide, and he tended carefully to the meeting in many ways. He served on various committees and for years stood in the front vestibule as a greeter, warmly welcoming those entering for worship. Hal was enormously generous, donating a number of improvements to the meetinghouse, including the beautiful light fixtures in the meeting room given in Sally's memory. He also responded to the needs of the larger world and was always thinking, reading and trying to do the right thing concerning world issues.

Hal lived a life based on his understanding of personal responsibility. Until 2010, Hal would show up for cleanup day to rake leaves and clean the meetinghouse yard. In spite of all the many ways he had given of himself for so many years, when he could no longer contribute by raking, he would apologize profusely for his inability to help out. As one of those in attendance said at Hal's memorial service, "You have done enough, Hal. Now you can rest." This speaks the minds of Westerly Friends, but we will miss Hal's loving presence and care and his hearty, "Good Morning!" in response to the clerk's greeting at the rise of the many meetings when Hal was present among us.

— WESTERLY FRIENDS MEETING, RHODE ISLAND-SMITHFIELD QUARTERLY MEETING

Richard Sivel, Jr. (1952–2011)

Richard "Rich" Franklin Sivel, Jr., November 15, 1952, to December 18, 2011, son of Richard and Doris Sivel of Penn's Park, Pennsylvania found the Society of Friends early in his life. Born in

Philadelphia, Rich and his family moved to Bucks County when he was four. His involvement with the Wrightstown (Pennsylvania) Meeting during his Vietnam War resistance led him to Quakerism.

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A member of Hartford Monthly Meeting since 1970, Rich was a dedicated peacemaker and an organizer for peace and justice in all aspects of his life. Rich also worked with New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (NEYM) and served on many committees, including Office Facilities Oversight (2005–2007), Publications & Communications (2006–2008) and a subcommittee of Permanent Board. Jonathan Vogel-Borne noted that Rich was especially helpful to these committees with his knowledge of information technology.

Rich worked with the children in Junior Yearly Meeting, staffing JYM retreats and served on the board of Woolman Hill from 1999 to 2002. Rich also worked diligently on the project to rebuild the historic North Dartmouth Meetinghouse at Woolman Hill. In addition, Rich was a major influence in encouraging Mark Fraser and Daphne Bye to apply as directors there.

Extremely sharp, curious, and knowledgeable, Rich always wanted to learn more. Early in his career path, Rich worked with The Computer Processing Institute, involving computer hardware and software. In his last position, Rich applied these skills to public service as Online Mobilization Coordinator with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 4 in New Britain, Connecticut. Rich always had workers' rights and the Union in the forefront of his beliefs and participation in social justice movements.

A peace worker in the Hartford area, he supported many causes, including anti-war activities as well as peace and justice movements. He was especially helpful in the 1990s, providing support for Native Americans, including Moonface Bear, in Hartford. In the 1980s, he also worked to provide sanctuary to a Guatemalan family living in West Hartford, CT.

Peace, love, and kindness were intrinsic to his family, his work, his social activism and in every aspect of his life.

— HARTFORD MONTHLY MEETING, CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

Suzanne (Sandy) Spencer (1935–2012)

Suzanne (Sandy) Spencer died of cancer January 15, 2012, at her home on Bass River in South Yarmouth, Massachusetts. She was 76 years old. A member since 1979 of Yarmouth Friends Meeting, a preparative meeting of Sandwich Monthly Meeting, she was much loved for her warm kindness and generosity and admired for her dedication to living a Quaker life. She is sadly missed by many.

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At various times over the years, Sandy served on most meeting committees. She was clerk of the Yarmouth Meeting for several years and at the time of her death, she had been meeting treasurer for more than 10 years. Though she seldom spoke in meeting, when she did so it was most often to ask for prayers and support for someone in need in the meeting or the community.

Sandy was quick to laugh, had a ready smile, and was always patient and kind. Her cherished home on Bass River was open to anyone who needed respite or refuge. She seldom complained of the difficulties in her life and accepted her final illness with amazing equanimity. An inspiration to all, to the end she was more concerned for others than for herself.

Her early participation in the spiritual life of the meeting included helping with the First Day School and leading adult forums on a variety of religious subjects. She attended meeting retreats and was a participant in Sandwich Monthly Meeting's Spiritual Formation program. She was also an interpreter with the "Sisters of the Light," a group of women composed of an equal number of Quakers and members of the Wampanoag Indian Tribe of Mashpee. For several years, these women traveled southern Massachusetts presenting stories from the lives of early Quaker and Wampanoag women.

Sandy was a faithful attender of Sandwich Quarterly Meeting and served several years as clerk of that body and also as clerk of its Ministry & Counsel.

Born October 8, 1935, in Norwalk, Connecticut, Sandy was a 1957 graduate of Vassar College with a degree in music. Following graduation, she lived in New York City, attending the Mannes School of Music and working for a publishing company while freelancing as a musician. She spent several years in France and England furthering her music career. In 1978, she came to live in her family's home in South Yarmouth and to take care of her widowed mother, Betty, who died in 1986. A lover of nature, Sandy turned to gardening, raising chickens and beekeeping. She also became an accomplished cook.

On Cape Cod, Sandy taught the cello at the Cape Cod Conservatory of Music and was a 35-year member of the Cape Cod Symphony Orchestra. She also played with the Brentwood Consort, a Renaissance and Baroque music ensemble. She was the composer of several musical pieces and the organizer of a number of Cape Cod cello choirs. She was a beloved teacher and friend in the Cape's

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music community.

Along with a close music friend and other meeting members, Sandy organized “The Friendly Persuaders” (two, three, and sometimes more musicians) for special concerts in the meetinghouse on the first Sunday of most months. Playing well-known, and some not-so-well-known classics, the event was enjoyed and appreciated by meeting members and attenders.

Sandy leaves two sisters: Peggy Spencer of Brattleboro, Vermont, and Lee Hoefler of Knoxville, Tennessee; and a brother, Abbott Spencer of New York City, and numerous nieces and nephews. A memorial to celebrate Sandy’s life was held April 29, 2012, in the Quaker meetinghouse in South Yarmouth.

—YARMOUTH PREPARATIVE MEETING, SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING,
SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING

Audrey Snyder (1917–2012)

Oscar Wilde wrote, “He who can look on the loveliness of the world and share its sorrow, and realize something of the wonder of both, is in immediate contact with divine things, and has got as near to God’s secret as anyone can get.”

Audrey was close to that secret, she was very, very close.

She saw the loveliness of the world and the hope for a better world in the children and because of that, she surrounded herself with children. When she and Harry and their family moved to Maine, Audrey worked as a speech pathologist in the local schools, helping children to better give voice to their wants, their fears, their loves and their ambitions, and of course, helping their teachers. At town events, at Halloween parties and at birthday parties, Audrey was there to be with the children, to be a part of the children’s excitement and happiness. She could listen to a child in a way few adults share; the child was safe with Audrey, the child was comfortable with her, the child could tell a story to her and know that Audrey would listen to the very end of the story.

She, Harry and Ralph and Jane Cook formed Cobscook Monthly Meeting of Friends. The meetinghouse was built on land the Snyders donated. She welcomed the opportunity to teach a First Day School class to our children. Those of us who were there at the beginning will always remember the children walking into the center of the circle, the older ones with the younger ones in tow, and the quilt they spread out on the floor. They settled on to the quilt and that became their “nest” for ten minutes of silent worship with the adults before

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going into the ell for the day's lesson. It was our weekly reminder, courtesy of Audrey and the children, that it takes a village to raise a child.

As strong as Audrey's Quaker beliefs were, she was not dogmatic with the children. Rather, she wanted the children to see the world as she saw it, beautiful, wondrous and a miracle. She encouraged our children to see the miracle of it all in a bird's feather that someone brought in or in a flower or even in a porcupine quill. She wanted our children to understand what being a Quaker was about, but at the same time, she helped our children explore other religions and cultures. She engaged them and always found delight in them.

As much as our children and the world's children were a source of delight for Audrey, they were a source of sorrow for her also. More than anything Audrey lamented the plight of children in countries ravaged by war, famine, or weather. To cope with her sorrow and to act on behalf of these voiceless children, Audrey wrote letters to our President, our representatives in Congress and at in the United Nations. She was part of a group that knitted hats and blankets that were shipped to children worldwide.

Audrey did not often rise to speak in meeting, but when she did, she conveyed the sense of being near to God's secret in her ability to appreciate the wondrous nature of the loveliness and sorrow in the world. She did not lecture us, but rather she spoke quietly and directly to all of us in ways that we could all understand. Her message was to be peaceful, be gentle with others and ourselves, and be loving.

—COBSCOOK MONTHLY MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

Eleanor Wilson (1914–2012)

Eleanor Wilson, a long-time and highly regarded member of Vassalboro Friends Meeting, died in Waldoboro, Maine, November 5, 2012, at the age of 98. She was born July 15, 1914, to Roger Nichols and Martha Chase Nichols in Portland, Maine, and grew up there and in Kennebunkport. From an early age, her intelligence and her gifts of poetry and musical ability (piano and harmonica) were especially evident.

In 1936, she married Robert Wilson and for the next 11 years, during Bob's medical training and service in an Army hospital, they moved around the country. Returning to Maine in 1947, they settled in Jefferson on the shores of Damariscotta Lake, where they raised

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four children and were vital and active members of the community. Bob was the town doctor and Eleanor, the spirited Quaker lady who always saw the best in people, was the quintessential doctor's wife, opening home and heart to the patients and community. She was also a very independent woman, ahead of her time and often could be seen riding her bicycle about town, a sight unusual in that day and age.

Eleanor's presence and active involvement in Vassalboro Meeting, as well as in New England Yearly Meeting, was a gift to all who knew her. One Friend remembered her as being a feisty person, speaking plainly, not shying away from expressing an unpopular view. At the same time, she always helped out whenever she could. Her kindness and generosity to new young attenders and their profound and lasting effects were most notable. One Friend in particular remembered Eleanor's and Bob's generosity in giving him a book from their own library about how early Friends in business set up many young Friends as apprentices, with the intention that they start their own business eventually. This Friend followed that advice, and now the young man he hired is running his own branch of a large European environmental company and is still an active Friend.

Another Friend noted that when he and his wife started attending East Vassalboro Meeting, everyone was friendly and welcoming, but one person, Eleanor, was "exceedingly gracious." When Eleanor found out he was a young doctor studying at the nearby Family Practice Residency, she insisted the couple come to the house for lunch that day. They agreed to do so and followed Eleanor and Bob a very long distance to their home. The lunch was memorable, and over the years, Eleanor would always seek out the shy young doctor and his wife after the rise of meeting and ask how they were doing.

Eleanor's strong presence continued in the Yearly Meeting, where she served at some point on ten committees between 1956 and 1992: Friends China Camp, Correspondence, Executive Council, Equalization Fund, *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee for the 1985 Edition, Friends Responsibility for Victims of Prejudice and Poverty, Mosher Book and Tract, Nominating, Permanent Board and Peace & Social Concerns. The one which probably demanded her greatest energy and devotion was the *Faith and Practice* Revision Committee, which met in Cambridge 11 times a year over a period of 5 years. She would drive to Clarabel and Louis Marstaller's home in

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Freeport and ride with them down to Cambridge for the day. That willingness to extend herself for Quakerly pursuits continued in later years, even after Bob had died, when she would drive the long distance (about 50 minutes) to Vassalboro Meeting, until she really could no longer do it. Even then, she remained connected to the meeting and cheerfully welcomed visitors.

Of Eleanor's many outstanding qualities, her steadfast faith and resilience, even in the face of life's challenges, including the loss of their son Rob at age 30, and later the deaths of Bob and daughter Connie, are especially noteworthy. Eleanor's presence remains in the hearts of daughter Mary Martha Collins and her husband Edwin, son Roger Wilson and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as her many F(f)riends in Vassalboro Meeting and beyond.

— VASSALBORO MONTHLY MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING