

Memorial Minutes 2004

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY
MEETING *of* FRIENDS

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2004

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W. Oscar Frazer

We give God thanks for the life and ministry of Oscar Frazer of Weare Meeting.

Oscar was a lifelong member of our monthly meeting, having grown up with his sister Ruth Frazer Osborne Woodbridge. He took his membership in the Society of Friends seriously and following the second query of our Faith and Practice, he became faithful in attending monthly, quarterly and yearly meeting sessions regularly and punctually, even when it meant traveling at length in later years when he lived far from Weare. His wife Ethel faithfully accompanied him to meeting.

He was a member of Worcester-Pleasant Street Meeting for twenty years while his father was pastor there. Later he was pastor of Lawrence (MA) Meeting and was recognized as a recorded minister in New England Yearly Meeting in 1966, while he was pastoring there. In retirement years, he helped in ministry in Weare Monthly Meeting and Dover Quarterly Meeting. When he moved to Keene, he encouraged the local meetings for worship that happened in that town intermittently during those years, but still kept his membership in Weare.

He took the advice about coming prepared for meeting seriously. He always came prepared to share in meeting, often jotting a few thoughts onto 3x5 index cards of any important quotes that he didn't want to forget. He then sometimes shared these as meeting began, to help others focus in on worship, and sometimes used them in Spirit-led vocal ministry during worship. We knew him to often include some humor in these sermonettes he gave.

During the week, he was a math/science teacher and a principal of various public schools, and a longtime barbershop quartet singer, but we knew him best for his ministry among us. He served on Ministry & Counsel of both New England Yearly Meeting, and Weare Monthly Meeting.

Thanks, God, for this faithful minister who dwelt amongst us.

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—WEARE MONTHLY MEETING, DOVER QUARTERLY MEETING

Lucia Fannie (Back) Barber

Lucia Fannie (Back) Barber, age 88, of West Yarmouth, Massachusetts, died January 25, 2004 at a local health care facility, following a period of failing health. For more than sixty years, she, with her husband Laurence Luther Barber, was a member of the Religious Society of Friends. She also served the wider Quaker community as a member of the Permanent Board of New England Yearly Meeting.

In June 2003, she and her husband celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary. They met at Boston Meeting and were married under the care of that meeting. For the past 25 years, Lucia was a beloved and active member of Sandwich Monthly Meeting/Yarmouth Preparative Meeting. She had formerly been a member of Hartford Meeting.

Lucia wrote the pamphlet *Invitation to Worship* for Yarmouth Meeting. During her time with Yarmouth, she introduced and welcomed many people to the meeting serving as mentor to young members and providing guidance to all who came to her for help. She also gave valuable service on various meeting committees.

Born in Worcester, Mass., Lucia received a B.S. degree in Education in 1934 from Framingham State Teachers College. During her teaching career, she taught in elementary schools and adult education programs in Waltham, Mass.; West Hartford, Conn.; Ankara, Turkey; and Mogadishu, Somalia.

During her husband's long overseas career with the United Nations, she accompanied him to thirteen countries around the world. While living in those countries, she was involved in various volunteer and cultural activities. For example, she directed amateur theater productions in Turkey, Libya, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

At various times, she served in leadership positions in the League of Woman Voters of Hartford, Conn., UNICEF of Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Princess Sofia Relief Organization of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. On Cape Cod, she served for a time as

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president of Cape Church Woman United and was active in the Cape Cod Council of Churches.

Her enthusiasm shone through her many drawings, paintings and extensive writings. Both she and her husband kept journals of their life abroad. To the end of her life, Lucia sustained a lifelong interest in national and international issues and politics, and she very much considered herself a “citizen of the world.”

Besides her husband, she is survived by a daughter, Lucie Clair Germer of Marlborough, N.H.; a son, Luther Laurence Barber of Needham, Massachusetts; and two grandchildren.

A memorial service was held June 12, 2004 at the Yarmouth Friends Meeting in South Yarmouth.

—SANDWICH MONTHLY MEETING, SANDWICH QUARTERLY MEETING

Constance Anderson St. John

Connie was born in Caldwell, New Jersey, and attended Caldwell Country Day School for five years; she said later that she learned there to be an independent thinker. The clarity and independence of her thinking, always graced with generosity, good humor and sometimes a touch of mischief, endeared her to and was an inspiration for all those who knew her. She graduated from Bennington College in 1937. In 1939, she married Francis Cushman St. John, helping him to run Barlow School in Amenia, New York. Following his death in February 1964, she ran the school herself for the remainder of the year.

In the 1950s, she taught in and helped her husband run the Mexican/North American Institute of Cultural Relations in Mexico City. In 1968, she moved to Putney, Vermont, where she became a member of the Putney Friends Meeting, served on the School Board of Directors, was instrumental in building the Putney Day Care Center and the Putney Friends Meeting House, and led the refurbishing of the Community Center. She was clerk of Northwest Quarterly Meeting. In 1987, she was named Woman of the Year by the Vermont Women’s Crisis Center.

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Connie had long been active with The Nature Conservancy, and, together with her husband's family, created the Bates Morse Mountain Corporation, a land trust in Small Point, south of Bath, Maine, which protects 750 acres of barrier beach, dunes, and uplands with spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean and nearby Seguin Island. In 1996, she moved to Bath, and she later transferred her membership in the Society of Friends to Midcoast Meeting, where she was a devoted teacher of First Day School. Many Friends in Midcoast Meeting remember Connie most vividly through her steady participation in the Book Discussion Group. Hers was a voice of reason, rooted in compassion and wisdom assimilated in her long life of learning. She was valued for her gentle good humor, intelligence, wide reading, and depth of understanding. Always modest in presenting her point of view, she was adept at reminding Friends of the long flow of history and of how little of it any of us actually experience. Her passion for the writing of Thomas Berry was contagious, as was her conviction that the world can be made better.

Friends and four generations of her family remember Connie's passion for and joy in music, whether classical, "big band," folk, musicals, or Tom Lehrer songs. She read omnivorously, often four or five books at any one time on topics ranging from the environment to religion and politics. She had boundless energy and enthusiasm for life, new ideas, and people. She was a vehement, articulate, and active pacifist. She described herself as having "one eye on the dishes and one eye on the cosmos." We unite with the sentiments of her daughter, who commented, "Wherever she is, they are lucky to get her, and we are lucky to have had her—and still have her in our hearts."

—MIDCOAST FRIENDS MEETING, VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

[Robert Mason Agard](#)

We celebrate the life of Robert Mason Agard and we give thanks for his friendly presence in our Meeting, for his service, support, and loving friendship, and for his unfaltering

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commitment to his own family and to his extended family of the Mt. Toby and Cambodian communities. We celebrate his constant commitment to Friends' principles and concerns, and the loving spirit he brought to his work, his family, and the Meeting.

Born in Williamstown, Massachusetts, April 1, 1916, Bob was raised in the Congregational Church. He was educated at Deerfield Academy and Wesleyan University, and earned Masters Degrees in Library Science from Columbia and History from Brown. He worked as a librarian at Brown, the Library of Congress, Ripon College (Wisconsin) and, in 1950, became the Librarian of Earlham College. As his father put it, "that is where he got mixed up with these Quakers."

Bob and his wife Phyllis began attending the unprogrammed Clear Creek Meeting on campus and later became members of West Richmond Friends Meeting. Bob was very impressed with the Quaker form of business used at faculty meetings and with Friends' alignment of faith and worship with political conviction and commitment to peace and social justice.

The family moved to Amherst in 1961 when Bob became Chief of Reader Services for the Library at the University of Massachusetts. His membership was transferred to Middle Connecticut Valley Meeting (now Mt. Toby) and soon he was on the committee to find a site for a new meetinghouse. When Bob was the Librarian at Bennington College, from 1969-1981, he became active in Bennington Friends Meeting and served a term as clerk. In 1981, they returned to Mt. Toby Meeting.

Bob had an open and inquiring mind and his knowledge of the world was wide and deep. His knowledge of books and his gifts for organizing a library made him an invaluable long-term member of the Mt. Toby Library Committee. In addition to his dedicated committee work Bob, with his wife Phyllis, was co-clerk of Mt Toby Meeting.

Bob also served on many Yearly Meeting committees including Moses Brown School, Archives and Historical Records, Peace & Social Concerns, Permanent Board (two terms), Committee on Prejudice and Poverty, Nominating

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Committee, Yearly Meeting Program Committee and the Executive Council. He also served on the New England Board of the AFSC.

In an ever-changing world, Bob's quiet and loving care was a constant; with his own four daughters, with his Cambodian foster daughter, and with the Cambodian refugee families sponsored by Mt. Toby. For over 20 years, Bob was known as "Grandpa" by thirteen Cambodian children (as well as his own ten grandchildren) and as "Dad" by several of the young Cambodian women. Bob's reassuring presence helped sustain the Mt. Toby Refugee Resettlement Committee. As one of the Cambodians noted, "Such a caring, and wonderful heart—everything he did was from his heart." Helping wartime refugees was a thread in Bob's life: Latvians after World War II while working at Ripon College, Germans and Hungarians while at Earlham, and Cambodians in Amherst.

Bob loved his home and his family, his music and garden, hiking and skiing. He was always practical. Whether as a hiker finding the way back to where he had led the group to a wrong turn or as a father helping a daughter deal with a complex issue, he would focus on what we could do now to improve the situation. He could break a daunting problem down to its component parts and enlist others to help him take action. In that spirit, he looked at large national and international problems and focused on specific ways that he could be of service. He took this same approach as age and infirmities began to limit what he could do.

He coped with his disabilities creatively and gallantly. His wry sense of humor never deserted him. As he had done throughout his life, he focused on the needs of others. He would do what he could and not worry about the rest; he was willing to let the Spirit move as way opened.

Bob died at home, surrounded by his family, on September 15, 2003. A memorial meeting for worship was held November 28. We remember Bob as a warm, gentle man, kind and wise in his advice and actions. His memory inspires us.

—MT. TOBY MONTHLY MEETING, CONNECTICUT VALLEY QUARTERLY MEETING

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Chouteau Chapin

“You’re from Midcoast Meeting? Oh, then you know (knew) Chouteau!” That familiar observation reflected joy in the present tense and joy tempered with sadness in the past tense. She embodied the delight of gentle wind with the capacity to shake large objects.

Ethel Chouteau Dyer was born in 1910 in St. Louis, descended from some of the first European Americans to settle in that area. She was educated at Bryn Mawr and London’s Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. She made her Broadway debut in 1936. She studied acting techniques under Lee Strasberg and worked with actors who later became stars, such as Marlon Brando.

A passion for peace and justice was the driving force throughout her long life. It found expression through her love of storytelling and the stage. When she received her first offer of an Equity role on Broadway, she felt called to turn it down because of her commitment to develop scripts with timely social messages for the girls’ drama club at New York’s Henry Street Settlement House.

When Chouteau discovered Quakerism later in life, it was the fulfillment of a lifelong quest. Quakerism, with its belief in “that of God “ in each person and its tradition of social and peace activism, served to confirm and strengthen her as she continued her prodigious endeavors to improve the world. She and her husband, Stuart Chapin, became deeply involved in Quaker causes, studying intensively at Pendle Hill and supporting peace efforts in Mexico, Maine and beyond.

In 1968, Chouteau and Stuart helped to found Midcoast Monthly Meeting and she served two separate terms as its clerk. Her stage shifted from Broadway, but it was still a stage. She generated the enthusiasm and coordinated the results into the Christmas plays she directed for all the children in the Meeting to participate in and enjoy. At the 1985 sessions of NEYM, she directed a historical presentation by Rosalind Wiggins entitled *Living the Beloved Community*, dramatizing how Friends have lived out our fundamental beliefs through

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three centuries of changing circumstances. For Chouteau, the problems of the world, though many and immense, always allowed room for joy and simple pleasures.

Chouteau often offered her home, "The Barn," in Montsweag for Meeting activities. Always enthusiastically involved with the children and youth of the Meeting, she was known and loved by them for her role as Charlotte in Charlotte's Web.

However, peace and social justice activities were her dominant interest. Her concerns were addressed through her tireless efforts in the Meeting, in Quarterly Meeting, Yearly Meeting, her Washington Congressional delegation, and a wide network of Quaker connections at home and abroad. She protested the Vietnam War and worked on behalf of Maine Native Americans and against the nuclear power plant in Wiscasset. In 1974, she was arrested and jailed in Operation Snowy Beach at Reid State Park for protesting Navy operations. During the '80s, she organized protests against U.S. wars in Central America and traveled to Nicaragua. In 1990, she attended a rally in Portland for which she made armbands to generate questions about ways to achieve peace in the Middle East. Later she worked with the Plowshares group protesting Bath Iron Works' involvement in missile weaponry. Attending a rally in a wheelchair was never an impediment when she felt called to help.

In 2000, at age 90, her creativity and love of life led her to stage a remarkable birthday bash in a Brunswick theatre. According to one Friend, she "planned, wrote, and choreographed the whole production." She kept the 200 or so people in the theatre enthralled as she dramatized her life story, which she chose to title *The Life of a Peacemaker*.

As her health declined Chouteau became limited in speech and mobility, but her attitude remained as positive as ever. Friends remember how she would greet them with radiant eyes and a big smile when they visited her in the nursing home and when they joined her there in meetings for worship. Chouteau died June 15, 2003 in Bath at the age of 93. Later, family and f/Friends gathered in great numbers on the beach

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and fields below “The Barn” for a memorial service that was a grand celebration, a living mirror of her vital, dynamic life.

—MIDCOAST MONTHLY MEETING VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING

Mary Hoxie Jones

Friends in New England are saddened at the death, and celebrate the life, of Mary Hoxie Jones of Haverford, Pennsylvania and South China, Maine.

She was born on July 27, 1904, the only daughter of Rufus M. Jones and Elizabeth Cadbury Jones. Through her father, a philosophy professor at Haverford with a summer home in China, Maine, she became part of South China Meeting and the Yearly Meeting of Friends for New England. Through her mother, a recorded minister, she became part of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) and the extended trans-Atlantic Cadbury clan.

She graduated from Mt. Holyoke College in 1926. Her father’s visits during her college years provided occasions for gatherings of Friends scattered up and down the Connecticut Valley, which helped foster formation of new meetings in the area.

Following graduation, trips with her parents to Palestine, Japan, China, India, and including a memorable visit with Gandhi, provided new experiences that she recorded in poems and a book. She also served as an assistant to her father.

During the 1930s, she organized the growing archives of AFSC, and used her writing skills for the book *Swords Into Ploughshares: an Account of the American Friends Service Committee, 1917-1937*. In 1939, she joined the AFSC staff, coordinating the Friends Centers in Europe and supporting Quaker service workers, aiding those fleeing the Nazi persecutions. After the war, she became a writer in AFSC’s Information Services department until 1951, and thereafter served many years on its Board. She was also active in the Friends Historical Association, the Pendle Hill Board, and Philadelphia Yearly Meeting.

Mary Hoxie wrote and published a number of books of

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poetry, the first in 1931 and the last in 1995. As part of New England Yearly Meeting's Tercentenary Committee for the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the 1661 general meeting of Friends in New England, she wrote *The Standard of the Lord Lifted Up: a History of Friends in New England from 1656-1700*. In her later years, she served as Research Associate of Quaker Studies at Haverford College, remaining active into her 90s, when increasing blindness prevented her from reading. Haverford awarded her an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters in 1985.

Throughout her life, Mary Hoxie maintained strong bonds with New England. The Jones house in Haverford served as a home-away-from-home for dozens of young Quaker men from Maine who studied at the college. The family summer home in China, named *Pendle Hill*, was a gathering place for the Cadbury cousins, as well as friends and Friends. Mary Hoxie was, for nine decades, an integral part of the summer community in South China. She participated in the life of China Monthly Meeting, Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting (hosted at South China every summer), and New England Yearly Meeting. Her many friends and family who live in the South China area note with fondness the passing of a major figure in the life of the Society of Friends and a valued fellow member of our Friends community.

—BASED ON A MINUTE APPROVED AT VASSALBORO QUARTERLY MEETING WITH FURTHER INFORMATION FROM AFSC AND EDITING BY PERMANENT BOARD, AUGUST 2004

[Robert F. Philbrook](#)

On Monday, September 29, 2003, Robert F. Philbrook died at age 73 after a relatively short illness. With his passing Portland Friends Meeting lost a stalwart member and our entire community lost a powerfully inspired and gifted champion for low-income, socially disadvantaged, and disabled persons in Maine.

Bob was born in Portland, the only child of Ira Insley Philbrook and Amy Crystal Bellatty. At six months of age, Bob

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contracted polio, which permanently crippled his leg, arm, and spine muscles. He endured extensive medical treatment through most of his childhood. His parents separated when Bob was ten. His experience growing up in a poor single-parent family shaped his later work.

From his mother he learned that in spite of his physical difficulties he could choose to accomplish anything he really wished to do. Early in life, he learned about the life of Jesus and the personal availability of God's healing love. From this, he developed a faith, which fortified his courage and energy for the rest of his life.

After graduating from Ellsworth High School, he attended the Waltham School of Watch Making and later established his own shop in Portland. One day Sandra Wagner Villacci brought him a clock to repair. This business relationship transformed itself into romance and they were married on New Year's Day, 1969.

Bob was suddenly transformed into a stepfather for four lively sons. He and Sandy had two other sons, Obie and Eric, and they all, along with nine grandchildren, survive him.

During the Viet Nam War, Bob counseled young men who had to make decisions about serving in the military. This was how he became acquainted with Quakers who were active in draft counseling. Soon after his marriage, he became concerned for the plight of low-income families and single mothers on welfare in Portland. He began to advocate for these families. He helped found We Who Care, an organization of low-income persons, and was a co-founder of the Bail Bond Fund, a program that enabled jailed parents of young children to stay at home until their cases could be heard.

These measures were greatly needed in Portland but Bob soon realized that such local problems were significantly impacted by state policies. He began to testify at legislative hearings in Augusta, becoming a familiar figure in the State House. He gained recognition as an authentic and articulate voice speaking out for the poor, the handicapped, and the underserved.

For a long time Bob was reluctant to join Portland

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Monthly Meeting because he saw membership as a hierarchical status indicator conferred on the chosen few. In 1993, the Meeting was finally able to show him that membership simply registers those people who have become clear to commit themselves to the work of the Society in all its aspects for the foreseeable future. Bob was later formally released from other responsibilities to continue his ministry to the poor. He continued to be active in Meeting affairs, contributing most to the Cemetery Committee by improving and organizing the burial ground and clerking the committee for the past decade.

In New England Yearly Meeting, he was a constant member of the Peace & Social Concerns Committee. He served on the committee for the Right Sharing of World Resources and on the Permanent Board. Over more than the last ten years, he was a consultant to the American Friends Service Committee and served on several of its committees. Just this past year he finished a term on the AFSC Board of Directors.

Two visible features remind Portland Friends of his presence. One is the old chair in the meeting room, which was a comfortable height for his special physical needs. Here we saw his lovely smile and heard his many uplifting messages, often beginning with "Dear Friends..." The other is the entry ramp on the Meeting House façade, nicely blended with its traditional architecture. Such ramps in that era were often unsightly and hidden on the sides or rear of public buildings. Ours is clearly visible due to Bob's insistence that handicapped worshipers should be able to enter through the front door as first-class citizens. Typically, with his fierce sense of independence, Bob tested it only once when it was new. Thereafter he continued his customary practice of using crutch and railings to climb the shorter route up the front stairs.

Whether fixing watches, automobiles, or legislation for the poor, Bob somehow found the power to get things done. In [II Corinthians 12:9](#), the Apostle Paul refers to some unnamed physical defect, which he suggests may be demeaning or hindering his ministry. He writes that after asking the Lord three times to remove this defect, the reply he received was that he still must bear it because the Lord's power is made

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perfect in weakness. Bob's deformed body and labored locomotion combined with his simplicity and outstanding ministry to the poor all served to make manifest the Presence of that Powerful Weakness among us. We in Portland Meeting who loved and supported him in his ministry as a released Friend might paraphrase Shakespeare's Hamlet Act I, scene 2. "He was a man; take him for all in all, [we] shall not look upon his like again." We trust dear Friend Bob that God's angels have now carried you from your faithful labors here to the divine resting place already prepared for you.

—PORTLAND FRIENDS MEETING FALMOUTH QUARTERLY MEETING