

2024 Memorial Minutes Illinois Yearly Meeting

Mariellen Owens Gilpin (1904-2023)

Mariellen Gilpin was a faithful Friend, a storyteller, writer, editor, and mentor. Mariellen was born on October 7, 1940, and died on July 24, 2023. She grew up on a farm near Pendleton, Indiana, with her parents, older brother, and her grandmother. She was actively involved in many farm tasks, including raising vegetables and tending the cows and pigs. In later years, she told memorable stories during meeting for worship, about her experiences on the farm, and she wrote about them in Quaker publications. One of these stories, "Light Enough," provides insight into her life journey. It recalls a time in Mariellen's childhood when, on a moonless night, she was asked to help her father reunite a baby calf with its mother. Mariellen wanted to take a flashlight with her, but her father said they would not need it. Indeed, Mariellen recognized each of the cows in the dark, and she and her father carefully and slowly moved the calf through the field and gate to its mother. There was light enough.

Mariellen discovered Friends' manner of worship in 1958 when she left home to attend Earlham College. She earned her bachelor's degree from Earlham in 1963. That same summer, she married John Gilpin and moved to Champaign, Illinois, where he was working at the university. Mariellen earned a master's degree in the teaching of English at the University of Illinois in 1965. She spent most of her career designing instructional materials for the Computer-Based Education Research Laboratory at the university.

On the first Sunday after Mariellen and John were married, they began attending meeting for worship at the Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting. Mariellen became a member in 1967. She frequently offered ministry during silent worship, using stories from her childhood and reflections on her personal challenges and spiritual experiences. She served on many committees in the meeting throughout the years and was clerk from 2004 to 2007. Mariellen was also active in Illinois Yearly Meeting. She led workshops during Annual Sessions, served on Ministry and Advancement for many years, including a stint as clerk, and regularly attended Women's Weekend.

Mariellen was well-known for her insightful writing and her editing skills. She wrote a Pendle Hill Pamphlet, *God's Healing Grace: Reflections of a Journey with Mental and Spiritual Illness*. Her articles appeared in Quaker publications, including *Friends Journal*, *Quaker Life*, and *What Canst Thou Say?* (WCTS). For many years, she was the heart and soul of WCTS. In addition to writing articles, she solicited submissions and developed supportive, encouraging relationships with budding authors. She also recruited most current members to join the WCTS volunteer editorial and production team. Mariellen edited two books, *Discovery of God as Companion* and *Intimacy with God*, which featured stories that were first published in WCTS.

Mariellen was very open about her struggle with mental illness in the 1970s and 1980s, long before most people were. She spoke out frankly in meeting for worship about her symptoms, her prescribed medications and their crippling side effects, and her journey to recovery. In these decades, she was hospitalized several times and given medications, which calmed her symptoms, but made it difficult for her to think clearly. In 1984, she started attending GROW meetings, a self-help group in Champaign-Urbana where she learned new ways of thinking and acting. Eventually she became a group leader in the organization and wrote articles for its quarterly publication. She was able to develop a

strategy for managing her mental illness and reducing her medications. She shared these strategies with others in need of a listening ear.

Many folks at Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting recall that Mariellen was the first person to make them feel welcome. She often invited newcomers to lunch or to meet at the library for conversation. She encouraged those she mentored to share their experiences and she listened without judgment. She helped people to have a fresh perspective on a problem. Occasionally she might offer a bit of advice, but did not insist that they take it. She helped her mentees to process difficult and traumatic events in a loving and careful manner. Being open about her mental illness gave others permission to share troubling experiences. She was gentle, unhurried, and calm.

There is light enough.

Alice Howenstine (1930-2023)

Alice Howenstine, beloved member of Fox Valley Quaker Meeting (ILYM), died on December 25, 2023, at home, surrounded by family. She was 93 years old. She and her husband Bill were among the founders of the Fox Valley Quaker meeting in McHenry County, Illinois. Their Pioneer Farm home has been the Quaker meeting space for many years.

Alice and Bill were drawn together by a deep appreciation of the natural world. As a child, Alice attended a summer camp near Cleveland, Ohio where Bill was a nature counselor. Eventually, she joined the camp staff and Bill became assistant director. A slow gentle acquaintance grew over many years and they developed a deep mutual appreciation for one another.

Alice and Bill both joined the Cleveland Monthly Meeting and in 1951 were wed in the manner of Friends, outdoors, on the edge of Hiram College. As part of the wedding, they sang to each other the duet "Because."

Alice completed a bachelor's degree in Education at nearby Hiram College. She appreciated music and loved to sing, but combining singing with her camping work turned out incompatible with the maintenance of her voice. She turned down the lead role in the Hiram College production of the opera *Carmen* in order to continue her work in camping.

Alice joined Bill living and working at a school camp operated by the Cleveland Heights public schools. There they had three children. In 1960, they moved to Chicago when Bill took a teaching position at a new Teacher's College.

Four years later they volunteered with the American Friends Service Committee and took their three young children first to a village in Mexico for a summer and then to Peru for a year, with. In Peru, Alice and Bill worked closely with a new low-income settlement in the desert outside of Lima

A year later, Bill and Alice were asked to lead an innovative residential program for college students based at a farm belonging to Pikeville College in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. There, Alice helped build community among the dozen participating college students from around the country, and with their mountain neighbors up and down Johns Creek.

On returning to Illinois in 1969, Alice and Bill purchased a northern Illinois farm, where Alice started a residential camp in the summer and provided day-long, outdoor educational experiences to scout groups and elementary school classes throughout the year. In a 2020 nomination for the Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame, it was said "Alice has an amazing ability to make every discussion, hike, and hayride educational. Her enthusiasm is infectious, and through ... hundreds of encounters she was able to instill in others an appreciation and respect for the natural environment." Their farm, called Pioneer Farm, continues to be a place for individuals and families to enjoy and appreciate the outdoors.

Alice was instrumental in the early years of the McHenry County Environmental Defenders. Her Outdoor Hall of Fame nomination said, "Alice has been acknowledged for decades as the inspiration, soul, and quiet but powerful, taskmaster behind the continuing success of McHenry County's recycling

efforts...". In 1979, she completed a Master's degree from Northeastern Illinois University, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies. Her thesis on resource recovery in McHenry County helped guide early recycling efforts for the county and region.

Alice and Bill Howenstine were among the founding members of Quaker Earthcare Witness (formerly Friends Committee on Unity with Nature), a North American network of Quakers working towards ecological integrity and environmental justice. They helped establish and support a collective farm in Costa Rica that pioneered ecological land use.

In 2017, Alice gave the keynote Jonathon Plummer Lecture at Illinois Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions, *Life is a Gift and a Responsibility*. It radiates with her humor, her deep respect for the environment, and her activities with family and friends, reflecting love, laughter, and community.

Throughout her extraordinary life Alice Howenstine was consistently a loving, encouraging, attentive, and exemplary mother.

She is dearly missed.

Chris Jocius (1943-2023)

Chris Jocius was born in Chicago on September 2, 1943, and died on June 27, 2023. He first encountered Quakers when he sought Conscientious Objector status in 1968 during the Vietnam War. He was helped and supported during this process by the Chicago office of the American Friends Service Committee. He considered himself a Friend ever after, but did not seek membership immediately, not wanting to take any shortcuts to becoming a conscientious objector.

Chris dropped out of his Master's degree program in Russian history at Northern Illinois University (where he would have had a student deferment) when he felt a calling to seek conscientious objector status. After several appeals to his local and state draft boards over a ten month period, he was finally granted this status in December 1968. He found alternative service in a Church of the Brethren Volunteer in Service project in Poland. There he taught English in the Foreign Language Department of the Agricultural University of Warsaw for two years. He unfolds his arduous, moving ordeal: both in a 2003 Plummer Lecture at Illinois Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions and in a 2017 series of presentations by five conscientious objectors in the Urbana-Champaign Friends Meeting: one to World War II, three to the Vietnam War, and one to the Iraq war.

Chris's life-long passion was to connect people with books and articles that suited their interests and to provide them with information that they needed. To further this goal, he completed his Master's degree in Library Science at the University of Illinois, training to become the ideal reference librarian. There he began attending the U-C Friends Meeting, where he was active on various committees and served as clerk in 1983-84. A Friend who, as a relatively new member became the next clerk, remembers Chris's patient thoughtful mentorship.

Chris first attended Illinois Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions in 1980 when assigned to drive Rebecca Ayars there from Urbana for her Plummer Lecture. Thereafter he proved indispensable to ILYM. As an ILYM representative to the Friends General Conference, he was on the Publications Committee and later became its clerk. Because of his work with prison libraries, he became a consultant to a national AFSC Committee on Prisons. Chris also served on numerous ILYM committees including Environmental Concerns, Maintenance and Planning, Nominating, Publications, Religious Education, and Ministry and Advancement. A Friend remembers Chris at the ILYM site on prep work days as the go-fer, the person who crisscrossed the campus, asking people if they needed anything, making lists, and doing the shopping.

In 1989, Chris moved to Aurora, Illinois, to become the Reference Librarian at the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. During his fourteen years in the Chicago area, he was a much-loved member of the Downers Grove Friends Meeting. Chris served on Worship and Ministry and many

clearness committees where his discernment and groundedness were much appreciated. He also created a program in Adult Religious Education where passages from books were read aloud; folks freely shared their deep personal experiences connected to the readings in an atmosphere of complete trust. His research on lesser-known but vital Quakers led to workshops at ILYM Annual Sessions. In 2003, Chris moved to become Head of Library Reference at the Missouri Institute of Science and Technology in Rolla and participated in the small Friends meeting there.

When he retired in 2014, Chris moved back to Urbana and rejoined the U-C Friends Meeting. He will be remembered as a cheerful greeter before Meetings for Worship. He regularly served on the Library Committee, buying many books for the meeting library with the funds available from a bequest. He regularly shared his book recommendations at the end of Meeting for Worship. He always had spot-on recommendations for individual members and often loaned them books from his private collection. He listened deeply with nurturing responsiveness. He modeled our Adult Education sessions on those at Downers Grove; attenders especially appreciated being introduced to Margaret Hope Bacon's *Mothers of Feminism: The Story of Quaker Women in America*.

His principled conscience, his sensitivity to the needs of others, and his quiet accomplishments are testimony to his spiritual gifts.

Jack Ostergood (1953-2023)

Jack Ostergaard passed away in his home in Naperville, Illinois on June 3, 2023, after a multi-year battle with prostate cancer. He was born on February 24, 1953, in Chicago and grew up in nearby Wilmet. He graduated from architecture school at the University of New Mexico where he met his future wife, Jane, also an architect. They then moved to Naperville to work and raise their family.

Jack was an avid woodworker and every year he hand-carved personal Christmas ornaments for family members. He was active in the community, serving as Scout Pack Leader and Assistant Scout Master, and assisting with Cub Scouts' Pinewood Derby Cars. He was a soccer referee and chair of his homeowner's association Architecture Committee. Jack was a lover of history which he shared with his oldest child, Tyler.

When their three children were young, Jack and Jane joined Downers Grove Friends Meeting. Jack served on the Building Committee where his skills were first critical to keeping the old meetinghouse building functioning, and then in the planning and construction of the new meetinghouse. Jack generously evaluated the plans as well as the contractors, scrutinizing the smallest details to help make the meetinghouse fit both the meeting's needs and budget. For 30 years, Jack also helped keep meeting members connected by printing, mailing, and filing the monthly meeting for business minutes and newsletters. Even in the digital age, the meeting needed the print copies that Jack steadfastly provided.

Jack is survived by his wife Jane, his children Tyler (Sarah), Emily (Daniel), and Sam (Madeline), his grandchildren William, Abigail, Theodore, Quinn, and Sophia, and his siblings Jill and Jerry.

Mary Rebecca "Becky" Siegman (1943-2024)

Becky was born October 21, 1943 to Maurice and Mary (Smith) McGhiey. She graduated from the Magnolia-Swaney High School, then worked in Chicago for United Airlines as a key-punch operator. In 1961, she married Gene Richard and they both joined Clear Creek Meeting in February 1971. They raised their two children, Kerry and Rex, in the local community. They later were divorced.

Becky struggled with Multiple Sclerosis for decades, but always showed grace in every struggle and shared her faith with everyone near her. She began raising and showing Arabian horses in 1968. When she could no longer do that, she worked as a bookkeeper for her father at the Priscilla Grain Co. in rural Lostant. Her last employment was as a bookkeeper for Rice Electric. Later in life she married a childhood friend, Dale Siegman in April 1998. They were active in the horse riding community.

She joined the Clear Creek Cemetery Committee in 1996 and in 2001 she took the position of secretary, which she held for about ten years, until it was too hard for her to get to the meetings on a regular basis. Though still a member, she had been attending different churches in Putnam and Marshall Counties.

Becky died January 12, 2024 at the age of 80, at The Loft in Eureka, Illinois. She was preceded in death by her husband, Dale, her parents and two brothers, Mickey (at age 10) and Ted (at age 27). Surviving are her children, Kerry (Bob) Fisher and Rex (Amy) Richard, sister-in-law, Sue McGhiey Campbell and grandchildren, Rachel, Anna and Kerra Fisher and Caleb and Ava Richard. Services were held January 31, at the Dysart Funeral Home in Granville followed by burial at the Cumberland Cemetery in rural Wenona.