

2026 Memorial Minutes Illinois Yearly Meeting

Nancy McLain Davis (1944- 2016)

Nancy was born on December 20, 1944 in Glendale, California and passed away peacefully at home in Villa Park, Illinois on September 4, 2025. She grew up on a small farm in Apple Valley, California with her parents and brother. From an early age she lived her life fully and energetically. She learned to ride horses and when she was given her own, she broke him herself and always rode bareback. She was very close to her parents and grandparents. She would frequently attend church with her grandmothers, and those experiences helped shape her understanding and thoughts about religion.

She attended Grants Pass High School in Oregon earning a nomination as a National Merit Finalist. Nancy attended the University of Oregon where she met her soul mate David who was from southern California.

Nancy and David lived for a short time in Albuquerque, New Mexico before eventually settling in Pasadena, California where their three children, Ben, Patty, and Sarah were born. The family moved to the Chicago area in 1972, and Nancy began a 30-year career with IBM, becoming one of the first female Customer Engineers in Chicago. She was proud of being a woman in a traditional man's role and loved to recall incidents from her career where one of her clients included the *Chicago Tribune*. The family attended and became members of Downers Grove Friends Meeting in 1972. Nancy taught First Day School and served on the Library Committee for many years. She enjoyed attending Annual Sessions of the yearly meeting and always took part in site prep and childcare. Additionally, she was a sought-after cook because Friends loved her food. Her hobbies included knitting, reading, jigsaw and crossword puzzles, and cooking.

Her daughter Patty describes Nancy as kind, strong, generous, intelligent and known as a woman of integrity. She encouraged her children to make their own choices, keep their priorities straight, follow their own interests, and to be confident. She encouraged them to try new things, make friends, ask questions, and challenge the status quo if they believed it was wrong. She always stood up for what she believed and always had their backs when they did so.

Nancy loved languages and was fluent in French. She often told the story of being in a taxi in Paris and the taxi driver complimenting her on accent. She always credited her high school French teacher. Nancy and her daughter took sign language classes together at the local library and signed together up until the very end of her life. For several years Nancy and David spent a month on the island of Molokai, and she especially enjoyed being in such a beautiful, remote location with David.

Nancy was a voracious reader and passed the love of reading on to her children. She liked to read all sorts of things—from funny novels to Proust and Harry Potter. She also loved poetry and was happy to recite her favorites if an opportunity opened up. Her favorite poet was Ogden Nash and in particular his poem about woolen socks.

She loved putting things together—jigsaw and crossword puzzles, knitting, and foods. She taught herself to knit and every year her family members received beautiful hats, gloves, scarves, and sweaters for Christmas. Her grandson wore one of the scarves she knitted for him in his college colors at her memorial service.

Her grandkids were one of the greatest joys of her life, and she was the very best grandma. She played with them, loved everything they did, and was convinced that each and every one was the most perfect human ever born. She also broke all the rules she so steadfastly made her children adhere to—

grandkids got to have dessert before dinner, did not have to eat if they were not hungry, were allowed to watch movies their parents had not been allowed to watch, and basically could do no wrong.

Nancy is survived by her husband David; loving children Patty (Mark) Erickson and Sarah Knake; devoted grandmother of Fred, Nikolas, Michael, Elijah (Molly), and Miles; fond sister of the late Tim McLain and aunt to many nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her son Ben.

Carolyn Louise Doll (1930-2024)

Carolyn Louise Doll was born in Havre, Montana on Dec 21, 1930. Carolyn learned to play the piano and to read books at an early age and these became past times she loved all her life. She met and married her best friend, Jack Doll, while they were students at Bozeman State College. Over the next 11 years, their six children were born and the family moved to Iowa, Tennessee, and California and eventually to Columbia, Missouri following her husband's academic career. Carolyn started attending Columbia Friends Meeting in 1966.

She participated in Friends meetings across the country and even attended meeting at the Hague, in Holland. For two years she attended West Falmouth Preparative Meeting as part of the Society of Friends at Sandwich Massachusetts, which was the oldest continuous meeting in America at the time. She also participated in meetings in Boulder Colorado and for seven years in Las Cruces, New Mexico. While there, she was arrested and jailed for a short time for participating in an anti-nuclear demonstration. Carolyn easily created a community of friends in each place and stayed in contact with many of those friendships wherever she and Jack lived.

A major appeal of Quakers for Carolyn was her belief in "pacifism." She trained to become a draft counselor in 1969 and counseled several young men during the Vietnam War. Starting in 1970, she was a regular at the weekly Quaker peace vigils outside the Post office. In her last year, at age 94, she continued to participate in monthly vigils at the meetinghouse.

Carolyn also loved the simplicity testimony and the idea that one "can worship anywhere." She said she felt comfortable in Friends meeting because she was "recognized as a real, complete person," not as Mrs. Jack Doll. She believed in equal rights for women and the right for women to preach. She attributed being able to speak without stuttering for the first time while speaking in meeting. She said she loved the Columbia meeting and very often felt "the presence in the silence."

Carolyn let her voice be heard by writing letters to her representatives and the local newspaper. She loved spending time with family and friends, playing bridge and scrabble with other meeting Friends, painting with watercolors and reading. She was one of Columbia Friend's oldest, most respected and loved members. She served as clerk and on many committees over the years. Especially in her later years, Carolyn frequently spoke during or after worship, giving us words of wisdom and funny or interesting stories. She had a ready laugh and loved to talk with anyone she would meet. She had an endless well of forgiveness, love and acceptance for all of humanity, which came naturally as a part of her deep Quaker faith.

Near the end of her life, she spoke of her preparation for her approaching death. She often reminded us that "loving one another is what is really important." It was a privilege and a joy to have her in our midst for nearly 70 years. She passed away peacefully surrounded by family on March 6, 2025.

William (Bill) Howenstine (1925 - 2026)

Bill Howenstine died January 23, 2026, at age 100, on the farm where he and Alice, his wife of 72 years, and their children Chuck, Debra, and Erick had lived since 1970. Alice died about two years before. In 1951, Bill and Alice joined the Religious Society of Friends and were married in Hiram, Ohio

under the care of the Cleveland Friends Meeting. Throughout their lives the couple shared a deep commitment to peace, protection of the natural environment, and recognition of the interconnectivity of all things. Bill registered as a conscientious objector during WWII. In 1970, Bill and Alice were among the founders of McHenry County Friends, which later became Fox Valley Quaker Meeting-ILYM, and which continues to meet at their home and farm.

At Illinois Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions in 1992, Bill presented the Johnathan Plummer Lecture. In it he describes the early influence of his loving, supportive family, a long childhood illness, natural areas near his home, and meaningful summer camp experiences. His life increasingly centered on people's relationships with nature. The title of his lecture is "Loving the Universe," and is accessible at quaker.org/legacy/iym/plummer/1992.html.

Bill was an active participant and contributor to ILYM. He has been remembered there as an elder; his voice was often a voice of wisdom and Spirit when needed. He and Alice were at one point the heart of the ILYM Environmental Concerns Committee, and Bill was always looked to as a role model even when others led the committee. He brought an environmental perspective to the ILYM Site Envisioning and Building Committee and planted trees on campus, including a row of redbuds near the campground. Up until his 90's, Bill and Alice camped in a tent each year. One Friend considered them "grandparents to the whole yearly meeting."

In the summer of 1964, Bill and Alice were directors of an American Friends Service Committee community service project in the state of Tlaxcala, Mexico. A year later they spent 13 months in Peru as directors of an AFSC community development program working in a low-income settlement in the desert outside of Lima.

Bill and Alice were among the founding members of what is now Quaker Earthcare Witness, an international network of Quakers working toward ecological integrity and environmental justice. In cooperation with the Quaker community in Monteverde Costa Rica, they were instrumental in launching and supporting Finca la Bella, a collective farm that pioneered ecological land use.

Bill's life included a rich mix of formal and experiential education. While completing a PhD in Conservation at the Univ. of Michigan, he built and directed an outdoor education program for Cleveland Heights (OH) Public Schools. He and his family moved to Chicago for a position with a new and innovative teachers' college—now Northeastern Illinois University—where he taught Environmental Studies and served within the administration for nearly forty years.

He had a gift for helping disparate groups find common ground and reach consensus. He did this in classroom discussions, in casual conversation, in community organizations and as Dean of Students during the turbulent 1960's.

In 1970, the Howenstine family moved to a farm near McHenry, IL, and developed an organic cut-your-own Christmas tree business. The farm serves as a place where people of varied backgrounds come together to enjoy outdoor experiences and find connection with the natural environment.

Bill and Alice were instrumental in the early years of the Environmental Defenders of McHenry County. While Alice was considered the driving force behind the county's recycling efforts, Bill played key roles in a number of regional groups focused on land conservation. He was among the founders of the McHenry County Conservation District, twice serving as Board President. To date, MCCD has preserved over 25,000 acres of open space.

Bill was thoughtful, kind, caring, and honest. He consistently lived his values; love was his driving force. He was a dear friend, inspiration, and mentor to many. He will be remembered, loved, missed, and carried forward in the hearts and lives of his family, friends, and those he impacted during his extraordinary life.

Sten Johansen (1952-2025)

Stenford (Sten) Johansen was born on January 14, 1952 in Urbana, Illinois. He died on June 30, 2025.

Sten was one of five children, born to Christian and Bernice Johansen. He attended Urbana schools, but he completed his last two years of high school at Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan, where he played the French bassoon. About his love of music, a friend wrote, "Sten was so knowledgeable about orchestral repertoire from his days at Interlochen and listened to it intensely throughout his life." Sten went on to earn a bachelors degree in music and a master's in library science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC).

After graduate school, Sten worked as an assistant professor in the music library at UIUC, a perfect match for his interests. Unfortunately, he was dealt some hard blows in his life, which affected the trajectory of his career. He was diagnosed with oral cancer and had to have major surgery to remove a portion of his jaw and teeth. Years later, he underwent chemotherapy and radiation to treat esophageal cancer. In addition to these health challenges, Sten had serious issues with depression. As a result, he was unable to continue working at the UIUC music library, but he found a way to make a living doing a variety of interesting jobs, including as a disco DJ at a downtown bar, a real estate agent, a manager in local restaurants and gourmet food stores, and most recently as a cashier in a grocery store.

In the late 1990's, Sten started attending a support group for people with depression, which later became DBSA (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance). The group met once a week in the basement of one of the hospitals in Urbana. At his fifth meeting, the facilitator of the group, who was then in his late 80's, asked Sten if he would take over as facilitator. Sten asked his mother if she thought it was a good idea, and she said, "Yes", and so he did. During Sten's tenure, the group has expanded from one meeting a week to three. Sten continued to facilitate the Tuesday group until the last few months of his life. What a legacy!

In addition to facilitating the support group, Sten organized a social time for group members at a local cafe on Sunday evenings. The gathering built a sense of belonging and community for the people attending.

Unlike social workers and therapists, Sten was on-call day and night to support folks in the group. Many times, he escorted people who were suicidal to the emergency room, advocated for them and insisted that they receive appropriate medical care. Sten started attending U-C Friends Meeting around fifteen years ago. He participated in committee work and was a member of the "Q Men", who met for lunch once a month. The Q Men often got involved in Sten's mission to help members of the support group. Sten had a large, old Chrysler, big enough for folks with disabilities to get in and out of. One Friend recalled Sten calling him when his car would not start. The Friend met Sten in the parking lot where his car was stalled and proceeded to try to jump start it. Sten said, "No! No! We don't have time. I need you to take me immediately to rescue someone who is in dire straits." They left the car where it was, partially blocking the path of other cars in the lot, to attend to the urgent situation.

Friends held a memorial meeting for Sten at the meetinghouse on July 19, 2025. Many of Sten's family and friends attended, along with a large number of members from the support group. More than one person talked about Sten's calm voice and how they felt welcomed and comforted by him during the support group meetings. Sten continued to struggle with depression throughout his life, but caring for others gave him a purpose for living.

Wilmer 'Wil' Rutt (1934-2025)

Wilmer Mellinger Rutt died, at age 90, on May 26, 2025, in Chicago. A deeply connected family man, Wil will always be remembered as a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather who treasured family reunions.

Wil was born on August 20, 1934, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, as an 11th generation Rutt in America (prior to USA), descended from Mennonites given land to settle on from William Penn. Wil grew up on a family tobacco farm that planted a life-long love of gardening and horticulture. Wil graduated from Goshen College and Jefferson Medical College. He married nurse Lois Swartendruher, and they took their growing family to serve for several years in Haiti as medical missionaries with Mennonite Central Committee. Their experiences in Haiti informed much of their life thereafter, with return visits through the years. Wil helped found the Oak Park, Illinois, Ten Thousand Villages nonprofit store featuring fair-trade crafts from around the world.

During Wil's medical career, he was particularly proud of setting up the first dialysis unit in Gratiot County, Michigan; creating a comprehensive model program for smoking cessation; and serving as founding director of The Center for Clinical Effectiveness at Henry Ford Health System. As Wil moved into health care management and research, he always maintained a patient practice, to keep grounded in and centered on ever-improving patient care and outcomes. Wil's management philosophy was exemplified by his saying, "You can get a lot done if you don't care who gets the credit."

Wil was always involved in social justice activities and community service. Two of his favorites were Bread for the World and Friends Committee on National Legislation. He served as ILYM and Northside's representative to FCNL for many years. He was diligent in lobbying Illinois legislators about issues regarding our Quaker testimonies and encouraging others to do so. He faithfully attended FCNL annual meetings when possible. Even in his final days, he followed national and global news, eager to discuss events with visitors.

In retirement, Wil came out as gay/bisexual. He and Lois had dealt with this for decades. They sent a letter announcing this, and their divorce, to a large circle of friends, and Wil was pleasantly surprised with the level of acceptance and support they received. They eventually became known, by many, as the most amicably divorced couple they ever knew. Wil had a partner, Leslie, a symphony conductor, for ten years, making Annapolis, Maryland, and Berwyn, Illinois, their home, and traveling the world.

Wil was delighted to be Dean Peerman's "September Romance." Dean was a juggernaut of an editor at *The Christian Century* for 62 years, as well as a perennial actor. Wil and Dean were married in 2011. They were founding residents at the Admiral at the Lake in Chicago, a senior living high-rise overlooking Lake Michigan, offering abundant community.

Wil was raised a Mennonite, spent much of his life as a United Methodist, and lived the last quarter of a century as a Quaker/Friend. When he and Leslie moved to Annapolis, they visited the Methodist Church, and quickly determined that this parish was not for them. Quakerism had always appealed to him, so they visited the Quaker meeting and he said, "That was that." And thus began his journey in Quakerism.

In 2004, Wil transferred his membership from Annapolis Friends to Oak Park Meeting, serving as Clerk and many other capacities there. After moving to the Admiral, he transferred his membership to Northside Friends. Wil was a valued member of the meeting, serving on Ministry and Counsel and other committees. As House Committee Clerk, he delighted in setting up Northside's library and a Sunday literature table; trying various ways to make the worship space welcoming and homey; and developing a strong bond with JASC's executive director. He also founded a mid-week worship at the Admiral on Wednesday mornings, under the care of Evanston and Northside Meetings. After worship, he enjoyed taking attenders to the café for breakfast where they heartily discussed world events. He was a light to live by.

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.

-Rabindranath Tagore