

MEMORIAL MINUTE

NEWTON GARVER, APRIL 24, 1928- FEBRUARY 8, 2014

Newton Garver died at his home on February 8, 2014 after a long illness. His wife, Anneliese, and some of his children were at his bedside at the time of his death.

Newton was born on April 28, 1928 in Buffalo, New York. His early education was at the Nichols School in Buffalo. After his graduation from high school he attended the Deep Springs School, a unique two-year college in California, which fostered an ethic of hard physical work and independent thought. It was at the Deep Springs School that he first became acquainted with Quakers, and also where he first heard about the well known peace activist Bayard Rustin. Mr. Rustin became a long time friend of Newton's, and an inspiration for him in the area of peace and justice. Before Newton left California, he joined with a group led by A.J. Muste, and publicly burned his draft card in San Francisco on Valentine's day February 14, 1947. For this action he was eventually sentenced to a year in a federal penitentiary, and thus began a lifetime of public commitment to peace and justice

Upon his release from prison, Newton went on to receive degrees from Swarthmore College and Oxford University before obtaining a PhD. in philosophy from Cornell University in 1965. He met his German born wife, Anneliese, while a graduate student at Cornell, and they married in 1958. Because Anneliese had lived through the agony of WW II and knew firsthand the horrors of war, she shared Newton's abhorrence of violence and his commitment to peace..

Newton joined the philosophy faculty of the State University of New York at Buffalo (U.B.) in 1961 as an associate professor. In 1964 he risked dismissal when he joined with five other colleagues, who refused to sign a New York State loyalty oath. Legal action ensued and two years later the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in favor of the non-signees. Newton later wrote, "It was a wonderful victory for the University even though it officially lost." In his 34 years as a professor he lectured, organized conferences, and led the Faculty Senate. He also collaborated with a colleague in the history department to organize a seminar on, "Human Rights in Theory and Practice." He was made full professor in 1971 and named "Distinguished Service" professor in 1991. As a philosopher, Newton was particularly interested in the 20th century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, and authored six books and more than a hundred articles about him.

In the wider western New York community, he was a founding member of H.O.M.E (an interracial fair housing organization) and co-founder of "The Citizens Council on Human Relations", which advocated for racial integration and equality.

Newton officially joined the Religious Society of Friends, when he became a member of the Ithaca, NY Friends Meeting in 1957. In 1961 he transferred his membership to Buffalo Friends Meeting. As a member, Newton served on many committees as well as Clerk of Meeting several times. He also served, over many years, as a representative for New York Yearly Meeting and other national and international Quaker Organizations such as AFSC and Friends World Committee, and AVP (Alternative to Violence Project). Newton served on committees for New York Yearly Meeting nearly every year since becoming a member of Buffalo Meeting.

After he retired in 1993 from teaching at the University of Buffalo, Newton began probably his most notable service as a Friend. He led an effort to help Bolivian Quakers, because they were a rather isolated and impoverished community. Because the children of this community did not have easy access to schools, he founded an education fund (BQEF) to pay for scholarships, computers, dormitories, and teacher apprenticeships. Students have since gone on to become dentists, and other such viable and productive members of their community. Newton became so well known in Quaker circles beyond Buffalo, that whenever a Friend from Buffalo Meeting met other Quakers around the world, the Buffalo Friend was likely to be asked, "Do you know Newton Garver?"

Newton's presence in any room was large and deep, and his absence leaves a very big hole in Buffalo Meeting and in the wider Quaker community. The comfort is that his life's echo will reverberate for years among us.

Newton was predeceased by a brother, Bruce, and he is survived by Anneliese, (his wife of 56 years), and daughters Julia Garver, Cecily Garver and Miriam McGiver; a son Geoffrey; a brother, Ted; and five grandchildren.