

## MEMORIAL MINUTE

### Peter Robbins Haviland

September 6, 1930 – November 15, 2013

Peter R. Haviland was a Friend with a capital F and a small letter f. His memorial service at Midcoast Friends Meeting was attended by more than 100 people, many of whom spoke about his patience, humility and good humor, as well as his community involvement and his carpentry skills. What could have been a sad occasion, lamenting the loss of Peter, turned out to be joyful, as those attending celebrated his life with praise and anecdotes about a good man.

Peter was a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His parents, Frances and Harris Haviland, were Quakers. Peter attended Friends Select School in Philadelphia and graduated with a bachelor's degree in English from Haverford College in 1952. He married Deborah Wisner Phillips in 1954, and the couple settled in Summit, New Jersey, where they reared four children before relocating to Maine in 1987.

A member of Midcoast Friends recalled at the memorial meeting that Peter always showed the gentle force of a Quaker upbringing and schooling. She said that Pete was an example of the George Fox teaching 'Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come.'

Peter earned a master's degree in hospital administration in 1957, following alternative service as a conscientious objector in a hospital during the Korean War. He worked for many years at United Hospitals in Newark, New Jersey, eventually overseeing the operations as executive director.

In 1977, he changed careers and became co-owner of a carpentry and home repair business. He enjoyed working with his hands and used his creative talents as a craftsman, builder and engineer to earn a living and later to renovate an old farmhouse in Cushing, Maine where he and Deb moved in 1987. In 2011 Peter and Deb sold their home in Cushing to one of their children and moved to a small retirement community in nearby Rockland, which they both enjoyed.

Peter's Quaker roots as a pacifist and humanitarian guided his approach to life. He was involved in his local Friends' meetings in New Jersey and Maine, where he served as clerk and treasurer, and he provided counsel as a respected elder. Pete was involved for many years in Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting and was active in encouraging the growth of an intergenerational spiritual education program.

Peter served for 10 years for the town of Cushing on the local school board and four years on the board of selectmen. Throughout his life he voiced concerns about social and political issues. He participated in peaceful demonstrations for anti-war and human rights causes.

Peter was described as a Quaker “who engaged with non-Quakers in an unmistakable way.” He was “knowledgeable and wise in the issues of the day, offering his opinions in a manner that never offended.” One Midcoast member said Peter was her teacher because of the examples he provided through his “honesty, humor and sensitivity. His presence demonstrated Quakerism. Pete was a great thinker and a gentle friend.”

His name appears many times in the history of the Meetinghouse Committee, which oversaw the building of the Midcoast Friends meetinghouse on Belevedere Road in Damariscotta in 1995. Peter belonged to a core of members who took part in the negotiations to acquire the land from George Freeman, a local landowner. The committee picked the Quaker architects Cope and Lippincott, a Philadelphia firm that understood the special requirements of a Friends meetinghouse — no stained glass windows, no crucifix, no pulpit, no baptismal font and not even a steeple —and helped to raise money and to secure a mortgage.

One member said she realized at the memorial meeting that the bench she was sitting on was there because of Peter. He and another member of the meeting found pews in an old church and bought them for the future meetinghouse that had not yet been designed. They were stored in the Haviland barn and a few years later were refinished and ready to use. She expressed that the benches were a real work of art - another example of Pete’s modesty and love for the meeting.

Peter loved the outdoors and good literature. He and Deb often took the family on vacations to hike, canoe, and ski and to share a passion for nature. In his later years, he enjoyed outings on his 22-foot yawl, *Curlew*.

Peter sustained a love for words and stories that he had developed when he was an English major in college. On first meeting him, one might think of a teacher or a writer, partly because of his gentle manner and a light in his eye that reflected his interest in the world around him. Even as he lay with a long illness, he kept his good spirits and sense of humor. One of the last books he read was E.B. White’s *Stuart Little*, a testimony to Peter’s gentle and kind, yet realistic, approach to the world.

Approved at Midcoast Monthly Meeting Damariscotta, ME    February 23, 2014