

Memorial Minute for Peg Stark

Margaret (Peg) Stark, aged 99, died on June 1, 2016 in Port Townsend, Washington. Having transferred membership from Little Falls Meeting (Baltimore Yearly Meeting) in 2009 she was a beloved member of Port Townsend Friends Meeting (PTFM) She lived the last four years of her life at Life Care Center in Port Townsend. Friends from PTFM made sure that she was able to attend both first day and mid-week Meetings for Worship and be part of a spiritual nurture group that met twice a month. She was a gift to PTFM, frequently expressing her gratitude for everyone and asking that we “hold ourselves in the Light”.

Peg had a deep love of the sea, nurtured by her early years in the Maine lobster village of Corea, where she was born in 1916. At the time of her birth her Philadelphia family was living in their summer cottage because her father had strong pacifist beliefs and chose to leave his job at a steel company when it went into weapons production during World War I. She spent her teenage years in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, where she attended a Quaker school and eventually became a member of the Religious Society of Friends. In her letter requesting membership in PTFM Peg wrote, “My early background had strong Quaker influences especially from my grandmother and the Greene Street and Langhorne Friends Schools in Pennsylvania.”

On a blind double date in Langhorne, Peg met her future husband, Bill Stark. When he was told who would be his date he reportedly said, “Oh you mean that scrawny little girl who plays football?” (All her life Peg fondly remembered those football-playing days.) Bill and Peg were married in New York City in January of 1937. Bill’s work as an aeronautical engineer took them from New York to Baltimore where on October 1, 1939 Peg joined the Little Falls Monthly Meeting. Bill and Peg had four children: Leslie, Willie, Margaret (Peggy) and Jean. In the early 1940s they moved to the Seattle area, raising their children in a house on Juanita Point on Lake Washington near Kirkland.

Peg and Bill became part of a mountaineering group in 1952, and during many weekends spent hiking and skiing, they discovered and fell in love with the Enchantment Lakes Basin, high in the Cascade Mountains and 15 miles southwest of Leavenworth. When Boeing started to focus on offense-oriented military contracts in the 1970s Bill decided to take an early retirement. The couple sold their home near Seattle and moved to Leavenworth where they founded “Family Adventures”, a business of guiding and providing outdoor camping experiences in the mountain areas surrounding them, especially in the Enchantments. They lived in (and ran the business from) a log cabin-style house on Icicle Creek that they named “the Chalet”. Many young people lived there as staff and working guests. (Peg later wrote a book about their experiences, *The Chalet Book*, which was published in 2015.) When the Alpine Lakes Wilderness was established and Peg and Bill could no longer take

paying parties to the Enchantments, they leased land from a timber company and established the Scottish Lakes Nomad Camp above Coulter Creek. They built platforms for tents and in winter led guided ski tours. The Enchantments were, for Peg and Bill, a place of magic and myth, and so they created a map of the area in which many of the features were given names from Arthurian legend and Norse myth (such as Valhalla Cirque). Those names are still used by many who hike in the area and some have become “official”.

Early in the 1980s the Starks moved out of the Chalet to a house in Leavenworth, overlooking the Wenatchee River. They ran the Scottish Lakes camp in winter and still served large potluck dinners to their “extended family” of hikers, skiers, and admirers. Peg’s family said that she “hiked like a child”, that is at a child’s pace so that she missed nothing, not the flowers, or the passing clouds, or the many, magical rock formations. Because of Peg’s health, they finally sold the Scottish Lakes business when Bill was 90 and Peg 85. In a poem entitled “Coming to Terms” she wrote, “This is the step I’ve made/To take Old Age by the hand and draw it into the daylight.”

In 1999, Peg’s daughter, Peggy, died from cancer. Years later Peg described the loss of her daughter as “a sad song in my heart that is always there.”

After losing Bill in 2006, Peg struggled to find new meaning in life. She found the answer through love – especially of flowers, birds, family, and friends. During the last years of her life, the other residents of the Life Care Center were a focus of her love, and she considered herself very fortunate to have found a special friend there, someone who was also a poet and with whom she shared her deepest thoughts and insights. Until the end of her life Peg wrote a daily “letter” to Bill, penned poems, and was never without a supply of bubbles to share with visiting children, treats for her dog friends, and birdseed for the birds that frequented her balcony. In a poem (“WE”) Peg wrote,

*“Before I am
exclusively that Light
that I now see
and know it’s me
how can I be
a treasure trove to thee?*

More than a memory?

*The answer is
by knowing
we are
WE”*