

William Braasch Watson

Our member William Braasch Watson died on Martha's Vineyard on August 13, 2022, one day shy of his 90th birthday. The underlying cause was Parkinson's Disease, diagnosed in 2006. He is buried at Mt. Auburn Cemetery.

Will was born in Rochester, Minnesota, on August 14, 1932, but was raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He attended Phillips Academy Andover here in Massachusetts before returning to Pennsylvania to enroll at Haverford College, graduating in 1954. He developed his deep commitment to Quakerism at Haverford, shared with his first wife, Patricia, whom he met and married during his Haverford years. Returning once again to Massachusetts, Will earned a doctorate in history from Harvard and was awarded a Fulbright Grant to study in Spain in 1967/1968. He taught history for 42 years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and retired in 2005.

Will and Patricia raised four children in Friends Meeting at Cambridge: Peter, Sarah, Sterling, and Gabrielle Watson. Although early Friends did not celebrate holidays like Christmas, the Watsons certainly did. No one who ever saw their tree carefully lit with real candles can ever forget it. They separated in 1975, and Will married Myra Harrison on Martha's Vineyard in 1988.

At Friends Meeting at Cambridge (FMC), Will served as Recording Clerk from 1973-1976 and, indeed, wrote the book on how to do it. Before Business Begins: Notes for Friends Meeting Recording Clerks and Recorders has been gratefully used by many Recording Clerks who came after Will. It was published in 1996 by the Mosher Book and Tract Committee of New England Yearly Meeting. Will also served as FMC's representative to New England Yearly Meeting and as Treasurer of the New England Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee. Even long after his Parkinson's diagnosis, Will was a valued contributor to

FMC's Peace and Social Justice Committee. It was he who came up with the perfect wording for a new banner when needed for various vigils and marches: "Quakers Standing For Universal Justice and Enduring Peace." In his last decade, he gave a thoughtful presentation at our Sunday morning Forum on the Spanish Civil War and the costs of the United States entering World War II so late. Will worked for peace, but had a nuanced view of the traditional peace testimony of Quakers, stemming, no doubt, from his research into the Spanish Civil War. That research included Ernest Hemingway's war dispatches, which he later edited. He also read Hemingway's fiction, and ventured out of MIT's history department at least once to offer a seminar for MIT's writing program, on Hemingway and the short story.

Will Watson was a gift to our meeting and Friends throughout New England and we are grateful for his life.