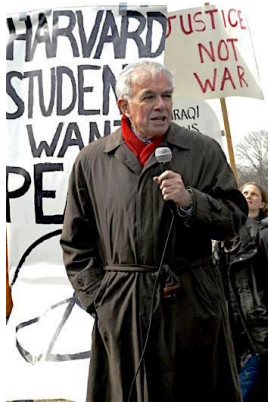


Memorial Minute for Everett Mendelsohn



Friends Meeting at Cambridge was Everett Mendelsohn's spiritual home. He frequently delivered powerful messages during meeting for worship. Many appreciated his booming, professorial voice and uniquely pronounced, messages. He'd often synthesize what others had offered to create a surprising new message. Probably few realized that he was an esteemed historian of science, linking science and society, and more used to public speaking than most Quakers. As a professor at Harvard he was beloved and widely honored.

Everett died on June 6, 2023 in his Cambridge home of a stroke at the age of 91 and FMC held his memorial meeting on October 28, 2023.

A Harvard colleague, Professor Anne Harrington, said, "In the classroom, Everett had a gift of gathering together the threads of a discussion, tidying up any incoherence and distilling the deeper insights. 'Let me see if I can pull together what I am hearing here,' he would say. Then he would show students an elevated and elegantly synthesized version of their contributions, so that they would all find themselves amazed and impressed by their own collective thoughtfulness." (Quoted in the *New York Times*)

About his activism (quoting the Harvard Crimson), "Mendelsohn was involved as an activist and organizer since his undergraduate days at Antioch College, where he — along with fellow classmate Coretta Scott King and others — was involved in the local labor [and civil rights] movements. 'I made a commitment to myself then, to work towards those goals I saw for society,'" Mendelsohn said in a November 1973 interview.

He and his first wife, Mary Leeds, brought their children to First Day School. His stepson, Marshall Wallace (who Everett raised from age 4) told me that Everett didn't believe he had any enemies, just people with a different understanding. He didn't feel he needed to convince people of his positions. They shared common ground.

Although devoted to FMC as his spiritual home, he never became a member, wishing to honor his Jewish heritage. Since a youth, he was dedicated to nonviolence, expressing it through his conscientious objection to military service. Inspired by his Jewish roots promoting justice and peace and thru the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) he secretly organized meetings of Israelis and Palestinians in his home and at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge. The intent, occurring before the Oslo Peace Accords in the early 1990s, was to fashion a long-term solution to the violence. Through his participation in the AFSC (he clerked the Executive Board) and as chair of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences' Committee on Middle East Studies, he authored and coauthored books on the troubles in the Holy Land, notably *A Compassionate Peace: Future for the Middle East* (1982). His messages in worship were often about his visits to the

Ramallah Friends Meeting and Ramallah Friends School. He was one of the few in the FMC community who traveled regularly to the region, often two or 3 three times a year; he and Skip Schiel (perhaps other travelers as well) often commiserated about their travel experiences. Preparing for his own trips, Skip often read Everett's writings on the subject.

Of special interest to Quakers and our Peace Testimony, Everett was a founder of the American Association for the Advancement of Science's Committee on Science, Arms Control, and National Security, and its Committee on International Security Studies. He was a founder and first President of the Cambridge-based Institute for Peace and International Security.

Everett continued to attend FMC with his second wife, Mary Anderson. When asked recently what message Everett might bring to Meeting during the War on Gaza, Mary said, "He'd ask, 'what next, once the violence ends?'" And—"contact your legislators and the White House". He perpetually sought long-term solutions for many issues. Quoting *The New York Times* again, "His family, in a prepared obituary, said that he considered the dearth of progress on that front 'his greatest life failure.'"

Mendelsohn derives from *menachem* in Hebrew which means *consoling* or *one who consoles*, and that seems especially fitting for Everett Mendelsohn.

Photo Credit and Description: *Everett I. Mendelsohn in trench coat and red winter scarf speaks into a microphone in front of a banner reading HARVARD STUDENTS WANT PEACE while an individual behind him holds a JUSTICE NOT WAR sign at a March 2003 anti-war rally as hundreds of people protested potential American military action in Iraq. By David E. Stein*