

Memorial Minute for Shirley Wolfe  
April 12, 1932 – August 14, 2022

Shirley Constance Penty Wolfe died Aug 14, 2022, with family at her side in her Ann Arbor home, eleven weeks after being diagnosed with advanced terminal cancer. She turned 90 on April 12 but was young in spirit and energy, still going for long daily walks at that time. Shirley was an active member of Ann Arbor Friends Meeting for over 60 years, and with her death we note a large gap among us. She was a lively, loquacious, enthusiastic Friend, who loved travel and made her life a living example of promoting understanding between cultures and working for racial justice.

Shirley first came to Quakers as a student at Oberlin College in the early 1950s. Over a lifetime of travel and residencies, she and her husband, Art Wolfe, were part of Quaker meetings that included (besides Ann Arbor) the Wider Quaker Fellowship (when resident in Micronesia); Tacoma, Washington; Bonn/Cologne, Germany; Berkeley, California; Adelaide, Australia; and the Manitou, Michigan Preparatory Meeting, near their beloved family compound on Crystal Lake.

Shirley and Art were very much a part of the early history of Ann Arbor Meeting. They were graduate students in Ann Arbor in 1955, just after our Meeting purchased its present property, and helped scrape plaster in the basement and clear out its clutter. They returned to stay in 1960 and their family of (eventually) five children were among the mainstays of the Meeting. Shirley and Art did not officially become members of the Meeting until they did so together in 1981, a case of a joyful welcome recognizing a long-evident truth. Shirley served on Meeting committees up until her death, most notably working on Religious Education in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, and faithfully serving on the Contributions Committee (discerning our Meeting's gifts of money to other organizations) for over ten years.

Shirley's passion for international understanding led her to join International Neighbors, a group in which local women help those from abroad feel more comfortable by hosting them in small "tea groups." For 40 years (through 2020) she ran their nursery for monthly gatherings, where she was expert at engaging infants and toddlers and reassuring their nervous mothers. She also did extensive volunteer work on behalf of groups working for international and interracial adoption.

Shirley's broad range of interests enabled her to keep us up to date on local happenings and issues, whether related to the neighborhood, the school district, local government, the University, or practically anything else! She was adept at connecting many of us with other Friends, projects, and places all around the world.

In her last days, Shirley chose to stop eating and drinking (VSED) to hasten her death and avoid prolonged suffering. Even then she continued to be plain spoken and to determine her own path, while educating others by sharing VSED information. We will miss the warm, upbeat, engaged, and concerned presence of this gentle Friend.