

Memorial Minute for Will Alexander (Red Cedar)

November 26, 1925 – June 27, 2020

William Maxfield Alexander, 94, died peacefully on June 27, 2020, in Chico, California. Will was born November 26, 1925, in Hood River, Oregon, to parents Lorena Mary Heider and George Maxfield Alexander. He was an active and beloved member of the Religious Society of Friends for over 65 years. Raised on the family farm in Parkdale, Oregon, Will greatly enjoyed 4-H and Boy Scouts. Although his higher education was delayed due to his service in the U.S. Navy during World War II, he received a bachelor's degree in agriculture in 1949 from Oregon State University (OSU). Will then advanced his education, earning a master's degree in agricultural education at OSU (1951), a second master's in political science from Penn State University (1953), and a doctorate in political science from the University of Oregon (1962). During his Ph.D. work, Will became a member of the Eugene Friends Meeting.

After one year back at Oregon State (Corvallis, Oregon), Will launched a 30-year career at California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo, rising to Department Head and Chairman of the Academic Senate. In 1964–1965, he was awarded a Fulbright Grant to teach at Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, India. In retirement, he continued his work in Third World population growth and hunger, seeking local models to address over-consumption of the earth's natural resources.

While at OSU, he met Anna Ellis MacGillivray (1929–2003), from Lafayette, Indiana. They married in Davis, California (1950), and resided in Washington, DC, where Will worked for the U.S. Geological Survey and on Quaker projects through Florida Avenue Friends Meeting. Will and Anna's activities with the Florida Avenue Friends, including week-end work camps for the American Friends Service Committee, focused on improving housing for those living in poverty (1954–1955).

In California, Will and Anna were mainstays of the San Luis Obispo Worship Group and opened their home to sojourning Friends for 40 years (1958–1998). In 1978, Will traveled to 16 projects of the Friends World Committee for Consultation Right Sharing of World Resources. Next, Will and Anna served as Peace Corps volunteers in Kenya (1979–

1981). Building on these and other Third World experiences, Will advanced Cal Poly's curriculum by establishing a new teaching course: World Food Politics.

Will and Anna served as wardens of the Wellington Friends Meeting-house in New Zealand (1994–1995), coming back home to San Luis Obispo until moving to Santa Rosa. Will lived in Santa Rosa from 1997 to 2005, where he served on the board of directors to Friends Association of Services to the Elderly (FASE), including oversight to Friends House. Will also gave freely of his time to World Neighbors, and to creating people-to-people research with Earthwatch Expeditions in Kerala, India. Will was a member of Redwood Forest Meeting, and he and Anna were resident Friends at Redwood Forest Meetinghouse for their first year in Santa Rosa.

In 2005, Will moved to Lansing, Michigan, and became a member of Red Cedar Friends Meeting. As a respected elder, he assisted the Meeting's financing, planning, and construction of its first Meetinghouse, completed in 2010.

While the immensity of Will's Quaker witness cannot be fully cataloged, it must be complemented by his loving caregiving of unceasing devotion. Through Anna's graceful journey with Parkinson's disease at Friends House in Santa Rosa and his second wife, Mary Celia Putnam Tuttle's dotage and death in Lansing, he exemplified the best of humanity. Will and Mary were married in the manner of Friends in the Red Cedar Meetinghouse on December 9, 2012. Will and Mary Celia's friendship of over 60 years is a witness to the power of love that moves in different shapes over a lifespan.

Will is survived by his older sister, Mary Helen Filz, and his three children: Bill Alexander (Lisa Vrebalovich), John Alexander (Jane Divinski), and Loree Monroe (Bill Monroe); six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. He is preceded in death by his first wife and mother of his children, Anna MacGillivray, as well as his second wife, Mary Celia Tuttle, and his brother George (Geo/Joe) Alexander.

*Memorial minute approved by Red Cedar Friends Meeting
on August 9, 2020.*